679/2

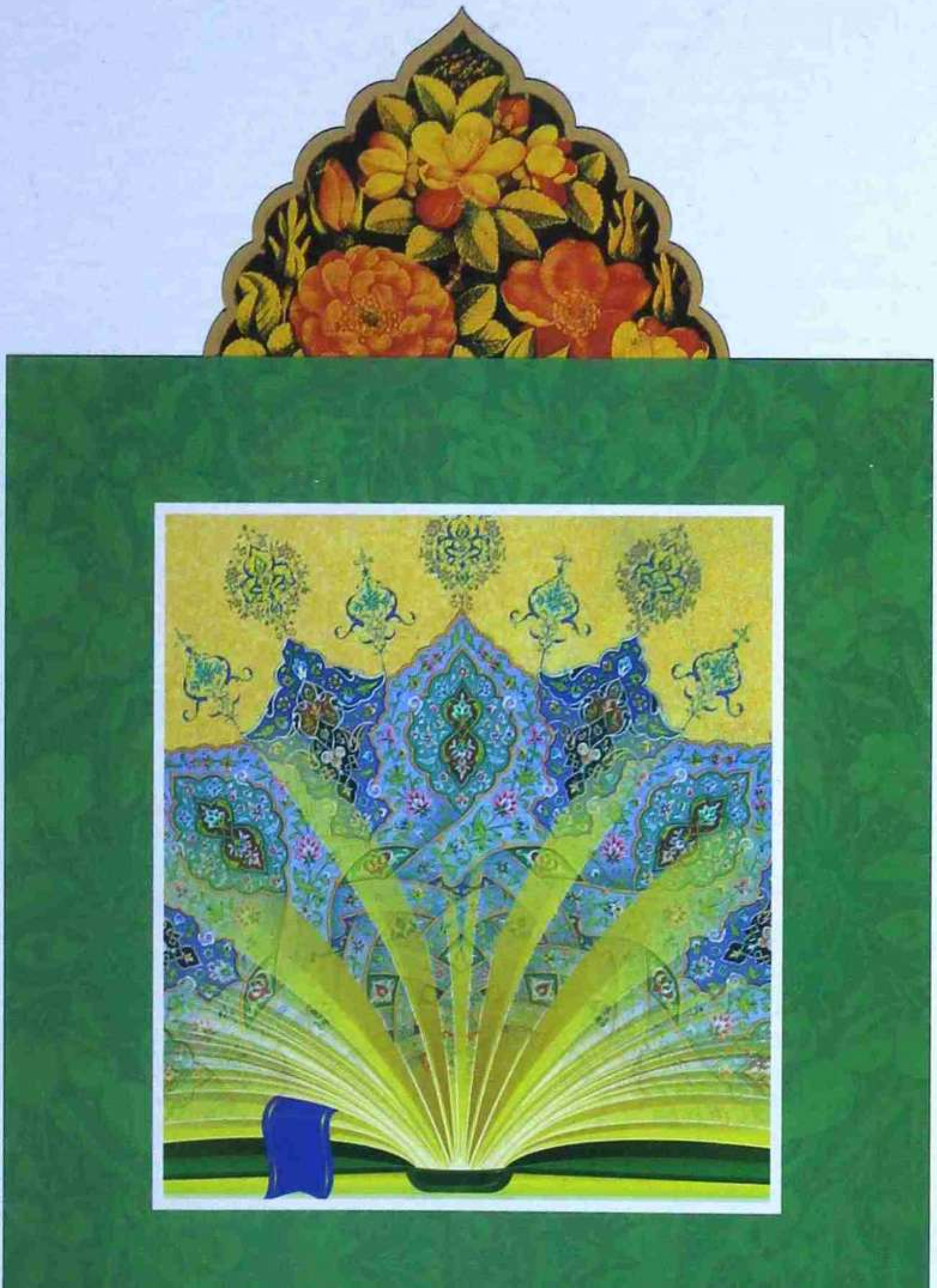
The Ahl-ul-Bayt (a.s) World Assembly

ISLAMIC THOUGHT
(Ma‘ārif Islāmī)

Book Two

Muhammad Sa‘īdī-Mihr & Amīr Dīvānī

Translator: Abuzar Ahmadi



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE ALL-BENEFICENT, THE ALL-MERCIFUL

قال الله تعالى:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

Indeed, Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

(Sūrat al-Aḥzāb 33:33)

Prophetic traditions, mentioned in both Sunni and Shiite most reliable reference books of Hadith and Tafsir (Quranic Exegesis), have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively involve the five individuals of the Cloak; namely, Muhammad, Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, peace be upon them, to whom the term 'Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House)' is solely dedicated.

For instance, refer to the following reference books:

A. Sunni Reference Books:

(1) Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH), *al-Musnad*, 1:331; 4:107; 6:292, 304. (2) *Sahih Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130. (3) Al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al. (4) Al-Dulabi (d. 310 AH), *al-Dhurriyyah al-Tahirah al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 108. (5) Al-Nassa'i (d. 303 AH), *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 5:P108, 113. (6) al-Hakim al-Naysaburi (d. 405 AH), *al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146, 147. (7) al-Zarkashi (d. 794 AH), *al-Burhan*, pp. 197. (8) Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852), *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, 7:104.

B. Shiite Reference Books:

(1) Al-Kulayni (d. 328 AH), *Usul al-Kafi*, 1:287. (2) Ibn Babawayh (d. 329 AH), *al-Imamah wa'l-Tabsirah*, pp. 47, H. 29. (3) Al-Maghribi (d. 363 AH), *Da'aa'im al-Islam*, pp. 35, 37. (4) Al-Saduq (d. 381 AH), *al-Khisal*, pp. 403, 550. (5) Al-Tusi (d. 460 AH), *al-Amaali*, H. 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse involved in the following reference books of *tafsir*: (1) Al-Tabari (d. 310 AH), *Book of Tafsir*. (2) Al-Jassass (d. 370 AH), *Ahkam al-Qur'an*. (3) Al-Wahidi (d. 468 AH), *Asbaab al-Nuzoul*. (4) Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH), *Zaad al-Maseer*. (5) Al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH), *al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*. (6) Ibn Katheer (d. 774 AH), *Book of Tafsir*. (7) Al-Tha'aalibi (d. 825 AH), *Book of Tafsir*. (8) Al-Suyouti (d. 911 AH), *al-Durr al-Manthour*. (9) Al-Shawkani (d. 1250 AH), *Fath al-Qadeer*. (10) Al-Ayyashi (d. 320 AH), *Book of Tafsir*. (11) Al-Qummi (d. 329 AH), *Book of Tafsir*. (12) Furt al-Kufi (d. 352 AH), *Book of Tafsir*; in the margin of the exegesis of verse 4:59. (13) Al-Tabrisi (d. 560 AH), *Majma' al-Bayan*, as well as many other reference books of Hadith and Tafsir.

Islamic Thought
(Ma‘ārif Islāmī)

Book Two

قَالَ رَسُولُ الله ﷺ:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللهِ وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَداً، وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said:
"Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [Thaqalayn]: The Book of Allah and my progeny ['Itrah], the members of my Household [Ahl al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [ḥawḍ] (of Kawthar)."

Some of its references:

Al-Ḥākim an-Nayshābūrī, Al-Mustadrak `alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533

Muslim, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ, (English translation), book 31, ḥadīths 5920-3

At-Tirmidhī, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, ḥadīths 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219

An-Nassā'ī, Khaṣā'iṣ 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ḥadīth 79

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190

Ibn al-Athīr, Jāmi` al-Uṣūl, vol. 1, p. 277

Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidāyah wa'n-Nihāyah, vol. 5, p. 209

Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-`Aẓīm, vol. 6, p. 199

Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albanī, Silsilat al-Aḥādīth aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah (Kuwait: Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358

Islamic Thought
(Ma‘ārif Islāmī)

Book Two

Author:

Alī Rezā Amīnī

Mohsen Javādī

Translator:

Mansoor Līmbā

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly

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Book two

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Publisher's Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim *ummah* who, following in the footsteps of Imāms of the Prophet's Household (*'a*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shī'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household (*'a*) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imām al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Alī Rezā Aminī and Mohsen Javadi, the authors of the present book, and Dr. Mansoor Limba, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office. ✍

Cultural Affairs Departmen
Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly

FOREWORD

The precious legacy left behind by the Holy Prophet's Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] (may peace be upon them all) and their followers' preservation of this legacy from the menace of extinction is a perfect example of an all-encompassing school [*maktab*] which embraces the different branches of Islamic knowledge and this school has been able to train many talented personalities by quenching them with the fountain that gushes-forth. The school has presented scholars to the Muslim community [*ummah*] who, by following the Holy Prophet's Household (*'a*), have occupied the station of clarifying the doubts and skepticisms brought forth by various creeds and intellectual currents both inside and outside the Muslim society and, throughout the past centuries, they have been the presenters of the firmest answers and solutions to these doubts.

Anchored in the responsibilities it is shouldering, the Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly has embarked upon defending the sanctity of *risālah* [apostleship] and its authentic beliefs—truths which have always been opposed by the chiefs and leaders of anti-Islamic sects, religions and trends. In this sacred path, the Assembly regards itself as a follower of the upright pupils of the Ahl al-Bayt's (*'a*) school—those who have always been ready to refute accusations and calumnies and have tried always to be in the frontline of this struggle while trying to conform to the demands of our time.

Experiences in this field, which have been preserved in books of the scholars of the Ahl al-Bayt's (*'a*) school, are unique in their own right. This is because the experiences have been based upon knowledge [*'ilm*] and the preeminence of intellect and reasoning, and at the same time, are devoid of any iota of blind prejudice as well as whims and caprice. These experiences address the experts, scholars and thinkers in such a manner that is acceptable to a healthy mind and pure human natural disposition [*fiṭrah*].

In a bid to assist those who are in quest of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly has endeavored to enter a new phase using these worthy experiences within a framework of research by drawing upon works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who, through divine guidance, embraced this noble school.

This Assembly is also engaged in the study and publication of valuable works of pious predecessors and outstanding Shī'ah personalities of the past, so that those who are thirsty for truth can quench their thirst from this refreshing fountain by understanding and embracing the truths which the Holy Prophet's Household (*'a*) has offered as a gift to the entire world.

It is hoped that the esteemed readers will assist the Ahl al-Bayt (*'a*) World Assembly with their valuable views and suggestions as well as constructive criticisms.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating pure Muḥammadan (*ṣ*) Islam.

We ask God, the Exalted, to accept this modest effort and enhance it further under the auspices of His vicegerent on earth, Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdī (may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent).

It is appropriate here to express our utmost gratitude to the group of scholars of the Office of the Supreme Leader in the Universities for writing the book[1] and to Mr. Mansoor Limba for translating it, as well as to all our honorable colleagues in accomplishing this task especially the dear friends in the Translation Office who performed their responsibilities admirably.

Cultural Affairs Department

Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly

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[1] *Ma'ārif-e Islāmī* (Qum: Office of the Supreme Leader in the Universities, Spring 1379 AHS (2000)), volumes 1-2.

Preface to the Farsi Edition

This Islamic studies course aims to elucidate the Islamic worldview and ideological foundations and to strengthen the religious beliefs of esteemed students. The previous textbooks had been written and published by a group of scholars on the basis of the needs and conditions of the universities at that time. With some technical and substantial additions and changes in certain topics, these textbooks are still taught in the universities. For many years, the Islamic Studies Professors and Courses Affairs Department of the Office of the Supreme Leader in the Universities has included in its program the writing of new Islamic Studies textbooks based on the criticisms and assessment of the then existing textbooks and manuscripts, the suggestions of Islamic studies professors and the opinions of some students.

Thanks be to God, the Munificent, this program has been completed and the Islamic studies course notes along with other course notes have now been written and published. After using the book in experimental teaching and obtaining correctional and supplementary views of professors and students, it is hoped that a model textbook in terms of its substance and structure has now been written and published, God willing.

The present book is a product of the Islamic Studies Section of the Textbook Writing and Research Unit of the Department. After sketching out its initial table of contents, it has been written by the honorable professors and Ḥujaj al-Islām[1] Ḥamīd Pārsāniyā, Muḥammad Sa'īdī-Mehr, Amīr Dīwānī, Muḥsin Jawādī, and 'Alī Riḍā Amīnī.[2]

The following notes are worth considering:

1. In writing this book, intricate philosophical discussions are avoided and an average level of understanding of students is taken into

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[1] Ḥujaj al-Islām: the plural form of the religious title *Ḥujjat al-Islām* which literally means "proof of Islam". [Trans.]

[2] The introduction of the book is written by Ḥujjat al-Islām Pārsāniyā; the chapters pertaining to the knowledge of God by Dr. Sa'īdī-Mehr; the initial manuscript of the topics on the Resurrection by Ḥujjat al-Islām Dīwānī and its revised edition by Dr. Sa'īdī-Mehr; the chapter on prophethood by Dr. Jawādī; and the chapter on Imamate and leadership by Ḥujjat al-Islām Amīnī.

account. In explaining religious tenets, Qur'anic concepts and traditions [*aḥādīth*] are amply used.

2. Due to the inclusion of the topics on Resurrection [*ma'ād*] in the first volume of the book and the extensive citation of Qur'anic verses and narrations [*riwāyāt*] in the Origin [*mabda'*] and Resurrection [*ma'ād*] Sections, the first volume is larger than the second. As such, the respected professors can use the sections in the first volume as they deem appropriate to supplement the second volume. Also, because of the importance of the chapter on Imamate and leadership in the second volume, there is more time during the second term to examine the different dimensions of this topic.

3. The general objectives are stated at the beginning of every discourse (section). It is hoped that the arrangement of the subjects in this edition will facilitate understanding and discussion.

4. In view of the lofty station and value of ritual prayer [*ṣalāh*] in the devotional system of Islam, selected parts of the works of Imām Khomeinī (*r*)[1] and a commentary of his *Ādābuṣ-Ṣalāt [The Disciplines of the Prayer]*[2], which deals with the spiritual secrets of prayer, have been included in the last discourse on anthropology in Book One so that the students could become acquainted with the inner [*bāṭinī*] or celestial [*malakūtī*] aspects of this divine obligation. In these parts of the book, some mystical terms and phrases have been used. With the respected professors' exposition and elucidation of the pertinent statements of Imām Khomeinī, these sections could be of much benefit to students.

In spite of diligent efforts in writing and publishing this book, the door for edition and revision is open for improvement. Suggestions and ideas expressed by concerned authorities, scholars, professors, and students can be of immense help in improving it.

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[1] The abbreviation, "*r*" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *raḥmatullāh 'alayhi*, *raḥmatullāh 'alayhā*, or *raḥmatullāh 'alayhim* [may peace be upon him/her/them], which is mentioned after the names of pious people. [Trans.]

[2] Imām Khomeinī, *Ādābuṣ-Ṣalāt [The Disciplines of the Prayer]*, trans. Sālār Manāfī Anārī, 2nd edition (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2002). [Trans.]

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all our esteemed colleagues who have contributed to writing, editing and typesetting this volume.

Textbook Writing and Research Unit
Islamic Studies Professors and Courses Affairs Department
Office of the Supreme Leader in the Universities

Chapter One

PROPHETHOOD

Section One: **The Necessity of Prophethood**
Section Two: **The Contributions and Blessings of the Prophets**
Section Three: **Revelation and Miracles**

Section One

The Necessity of Prophethood

General objectives

After studying this discourse, the students are expected:

1. To realize the rational necessity of prophethood;
2. To be acquainted with the views of philosophers and scholastic theologians about revelation; and
3. To understand the perspective of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* regarding revelation.

Introduction

The issue of prophethood [*nubuwwah*] or apostleship [*risālah*] is the subject of many pages of voluminous history books—the accounts of men who spent their lives conveying the message of God to His servants and experienced different afflictions along this way.

Here, we do not need to scan the pages of history to ascertain their existence because the signs of their existence are so obvious for us that there is no room for doubt. When our eyes are attracted to the architectural magnificence of churches or mosques, when our ears are drawn to the melodious recitation of the Qur'an or the call to prayer [*adhān*], and when we observe faithful men and women sincerely and earnestly treading the path shown by the apostles of God (*'a*),[1] we can see within ourselves the luminous visage of the prophets (*'a*).

By hearing the sound of the invitation of the prophets (*'a*, seeing their celestial countenances and observing their saintly conduct, so many men and women were attracted to and believed in them. This faith

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[1] The abbreviation, "*'a*" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *'alayhi 's-salām*, *'alayhim 'us-salām*, or *'alayhā 's-salām* [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imāms from the Prophet's progeny, and saints (*'a*). [Trans.]

[*īmān*] is based on the testimony of human nature [*fiṭrah*] which smells the familiar scent of the celestial world in the persons of the prophets (*'a*) and acknowledges their truthfulness or rightfulness without the need for rational investigation. However, this faith does not close the door for reflection [*ta'ammul*] and thinking. In fact, it opens it wide. For those who have not yet embraced the faith, thinking can be a fertile ground for the growth of the seeds of faith while for those who have faith, it serves as a means of defending the faith and nurturing and cultivating the bud of belief [*'aqīdah*].

This point shows that the rational study or examination of prophethood is not an indispensable condition of faith in the prophets (*'a*) but only substantiates or supplements this faith.

As the door for thinking about prophethood is now open, questions must be given answers which the intellect or reason [*'aql*] can grasp well. This is exactly the concern of this chapter, and the following questions will be addressed:

1. Why must there be prophets in the lives of humankind? (The necessity of prophethood)
2. What services and benefits have the prophets rendered to mankind? (The blessings of the prophets (*'a*))
3. How did the prophets communicate with God and receive His message? (Revelation)
4. How can we be certain about the truthfulness of their claims to prophethood? (Miracles)
5. Assuming that their presence is necessary, why has the caravan of prophethood ceased to move? (Finality of the prophethood)

***

In the history of Islamic thought, the debate on the *necessity* of prophethood has delved more into answering the following question: Why must God have sent prophets to mankind? Muslim scholars have tried to explain the philosophy behind the sending down of the prophets (*'a*) which is related to the 'action of God'.

However, there is another question here and that is: Why should we humans pay heed and take seriously the message and invitation of the apostles (*'a*)? Could we not bother to take their invitation into account and just go along our way and pass by without paying attention to them? This question (regarding the human need to follow the prophets (*'a*)) is of immense importance nowadays. In Islamic philosophy and theology books, the following question is also addressed: Why should man conduct research and investigation about the prophets (*'a*)? However, this question has not been dealt with at great length. Perhaps, the reason for this is that it is believed that if the philosophy behind the sending down of prophets (*'a*) is established, the philosophy behind the human need to follow the prophets (*'a*) will also be proven.

Muslim scholars have answered these questions by first dealing with God and His Action, and concluding with man and his need to follow the prophets (*'a*). Nowadays, however, there are some transcendent theosophers [*muta'allihīn*] who start by studying man and his need to follow the prophets (*'a*), and concluding with God and His Action (sending down of the prophets (*'a*)). This approach is widely adopted in the Christian world but is also to some extent observed in the works of Muslim scholars.

In this book, we shall follow the dominant approach in the books of Islamic philosophy and theology. By explaining the 'Action of God' (the necessity of sending down of the prophets (*'a*)), we shall also establish the human need to follow the prophets (*'a*).

The necessity of prophethood from the Islamic theological perspective

Scholastic theology or theology [*'ilm al-kalām* or *kalām*], which is one of the important branches of Islamic sciences, has a long precedence. Scholastic theologians or theologians [*mutakallimīn*] are those who expound religious beliefs and defend them against the misgivings and doubts expressed by others. Sometimes, these misgivings and doubts originate from outside the Islamic world. For example, whenever the principle of the existence of God or monotheism [*tawḥīd*] was under attack, all Muslim theologians would come forward to defend it. However, there have also been times when doubts or misgivings were expressed by Muslims against the beliefs of fellow Muslims, and this has led to the emergence of different groups of theologians.

In addition, theologians have also differed about the methods of defending their religious beliefs. Some of them such as the Mu'tazilites [*Mu'tazilah*] preferred the rational method while others such as the Ash'arites [*Ashā'irah*] did not much incline to rational theorization. In terms of method, the Shī'ah[1] theology has many similarities to that of the Mu'tazilites but has fundamental differences with it with regard to the beliefs being defended.[2]

In this section, we shall use the arguments advanced by a great Shī'ah theologian, Sayyid Murtaḍā.[3]

Through use of their intellect, human beings know that some things are good while others are bad, and to know this, they are in no need of revelation [*wahī*]. Without citing any basis from revelation, we know that justice, honesty and trustworthiness are good and that injustice and violation of the rights of others are bad.[4]

Human beings not only understand the goodness of justice and gratitude for the kindness and benevolence of others but also consider themselves bound to observe justice and express gratitude towards others. In other words, the intellect is not only aware that justice is good but also knows that one must behave according to justice and not oppose it. Perception of the necessity and expediency of doing an action does not necessarily mean perception of its goodness and wholesomeness. Theologians have discussed at length the rational perception of duties (rational obligation).

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[1] In this volume, I have maintained the word "Shī'ah" to refer to both the group (single collective unit) and the individuals constituting the group (plural). [Trans.]

[2] See Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Understanding Islamic Sciences* (London: ICAS Press, 2002), p. 57-84. [Trans.]

[3] See ash-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Adh-dhakhīrah fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, p. 323.
Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Alam al-Hudā (355-436 AH): a man of versatility with a keen taste and talent for literature, jurisprudence and theology whose verdicts and opinions are taken into account even today. Both he and his brother Sayyid ar-Raḍī, the compiler of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, studied from Shaykh al-Mufīd. [Trans.]

[4] Some theologians point out the origin of the difference between good and bad actions, believing that its criterion is the effects they bring about in the lives of human beings. Accordingly, good deeds are the source of felicity while evil deeds lead to perdition.

The emphasis on the importance of intellect in perceiving what is good or bad and identifying responsibility shows the high station of the intellect in the life of humankind. In the Islamic traditions, the intellect is described as the "inner apostle" [*rasūl-e bāṭin*]. Nevertheless, such an expression should not make us negligent of its definitional scope and limitations.

Attention to the scope and limitation of the intellect and its function is the basis of the theological proof [*burhān-e kalāmī*] for the necessity of prophethood. Some of its limitations are as follows:

1. It is true that the intellect is capable of identifying the general principles underlying good and bad actions, but it is incapable of identifying particular cases in which a person is more involved in his practical life. Whenever the rational intellect [*'aql-e istidlālī*] intends to identify the ruling on specific cases, it often makes mistakes. The human intellect perceives that expressing gratitude to God is both good and obligatory, but it does not know which actions express such gratitude. The intellect is conscious of the necessity of respecting the rights of others, but it does not know exactly how to respect those rights nor does it know precisely what those rights are.

2. No doubt, the purpose of identifying good and bad actions is for people to train themselves to do good deeds and refrain from evil deeds. The truth of the matter, however, is that just to identify the goodness of actions and to sense the rational duty to do them does not automatically turn into action. In the same manner, mere identification of wicked acts does not translate into abandonment of the same. In addition to perception of an act's goodness and the feeling of having a sense of duty, the performance of a voluntary action depends on the decision and will of a person. The nature of human will and the manner of decision-making are also completely intertwined with a person's feelings, inclinations and desires.

Many people know that it is detestable to misappropriate the property of others, but the pressure of hunger can lead them away from this natural sense of responsibility and urge them to sacrifice their will at the altar of needs and inclinations.

It is of immense importance to pay attention to the crucial role of feelings and emotions and it bespeaks of the fact that the guidance or direction of man toward perfection and deliverance does not depend solely on his intellect and reason. In fact, training or upbringing must also be given importance in such a way that feelings and emotions also assist man and not hinder him along the path of doing wholesome and righteous deeds.

The ethicists or moral teachers who reflect much on the elements of moral or righteous deeds inform us that the intellect is sometimes subdued by the desire [*hawā*] and delegates the guidance or stewardship of the ship of humanity's existence to feelings and emotions. Worse still, apart from delegating the captainship of the ship of existence to the feelings and emotions, at times it even makes itself their slave. Ethicists call such intellect the "satanic intellect" [*'aql-e shayṭānī*] which indulges in trickery to satiate bestial instincts and desires. As such, if man is supposed to attain salvation by doing righteous deeds and following the dictates of his reason, his feelings and emotions must be disciplined so as to abide by the intellect, and not the other way around.

Yea, it is a reality that God has made the intellect a light to show the way leading to man's salvation, but it is also a fact that this beam does not shed light on every perspective of this way. Its brightness is not so strong that a breeze emitting from the carnal desires cannot blow it out.

Now, the following question can be raised: Does God truly intend to guide us or not? If not, why has He created the light of reason in human beings? If He does intend to guide humankind toward salvation and felicity—as He must be based on His infinite mercy—then He who knows everything, including the limitations of the "inner apostle", would certainly send assistance so as to enhance the brightness of the light as well as to make it safe from the whirlwind of whims and caprice.

If God does not want to invite people to do righteous deeds, why has He bestowed them with an intellect which urges them towards righteousness? If He wants to guide humanity towards felicity through righteous deeds, why would He not supplement or complement the intellect's invitation through revelation? If one is serious in inviting a friend and knows that by just reading an invitation the friend will not come, would he not send a representative to accompany the friend so that he would be assured of him coming?

The same is true in the case of God's invitation to do righteous deeds and worship Him [*'ubūdiyyah*]. Out of His grace, He bestowed man with the intellect. In the same manner, out of His grace, He sent His chosen ones to affirm the intellect's invitation and assist humanity by clearly showing the different dimensions of the way to salvation. In addition, by linking righteous deeds to everlasting bliss in the hereafter and evil deeds to eternal damnation in the afterlife, humanity's feelings and emotions were resolutely set at the service of their intellects. If a person were to truly understand that by doing righteous deeds he would attain divine proximity [*qurb-e ilāhī*], and that divine pleasure or satisfaction, which manifests in various forms, is the most pleasant of all things, would he not desire to perform more and more righteous deeds? Theologians call these acts of God "grace" [*lutf*] and consider them incumbent upon Him, for He does not withhold any grace that does not result in some type of harm or corruption among creation.

Therefore, the theologian's approach is essentially based on the fact that God has invited man in accordance with the invitation of the intellect to good, but that without the sending down of apostles (*'a*) this invitation is less productive and imperfect. Similarly, without the sending down of revelation the light of the intellect will not be sufficiently bright. He who, out of His grace, endows humanity with the intellect also grants the religion and revelation so as to make the light of reason brilliant enough to assist the intellect against whims and caprice by linking everlasting felicity to righteous deeds.

The necessity of prophethood from the Islamic philosophical perspective

Although Islamic philosophy [*falsafah* or *ḥikmah*][1] is rooted in Qur'anic wisdom and Islamic traditions, especially the sayings of Imam[2] 'Alī (*'a*), there is no doubt that its organization or systematization into an organized body of knowledge is the result of the acquaintance of Muslim scholars with Greek thoughts with the translation [into Arabic] of their works during the second and third century AH. The Islamic civilization has produced great philosophers the most prominent of whom are Fārābī,[1] Ibn Sīnā,[2] Shaykh al-Ishrāq,[1]

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[1] Regarding its literal and semantic definitions, see Muṭahharī, *Understanding Islamic Sciences*, pp. 11-19. [Trans.]

[2] *Ḥaḍrat*: The Arabic word *Ḥaḍrat* is used as a respectful form of address. [Trans.]

1- One of Islam's leading philosophers, al-Fārābī was born at Fārāb, situated on the Jaxartes (Syr Darya), the modern Otrar. Coming to Baghdad, he studied under the Christian doctor Johanna, son of Hilan. Another of his teachers was Abū Bishr Matta, known as a translator of Greek works. He next proceeded to Aleppo, to the court of Ṣayf ad-Dawlah, son of Hamdān, and led a somewhat retired life under his protection, assuming the garb of a Sufi. When this prince captured Damascus, he took the philosopher with him, and there Fārābī died in 339 AH/950. Fārābī's literary production was considerable, but a great number of his works were lost very early. They were chiefly commentaries or explanations of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle. In the sphere of moral philosophy he wrote a commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*; in that of political philosophy, he made a summary of *Plato's Laws*, and composed a short treatise on the *Ideal City*. To psychology and metaphysics he contributed numerous works, with such titles as *Intelligence and the Intelligible*, *The Soul*, *The Faculties of the Soul*, *The One and Unity*, *Substance*, *Time*, *The Void*, and *Space and Measure*. He also commented on Alexander of Aphrodisias' book, *de Anima*. Believing that Greek philosophy was a unity, he labored to reconcile Plato and Aristotle, and with this idea wrote treatises on *The Aims of Plato and Aristotle* and *The Agreement between Plato and Aristotle*. He also discussed certain interpretations of Aristotle proposed by Galen and John Philoponus, and composed *An Intervention between Aristotle and Galen*. [Trans.]

2- Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Sīnā, or Avicenna, entitled *al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs*, or *Ḥujjat al-Ḥaqq* by his compatriots, simply *Shaykh* by his disciples, and the *Prince of Physicians* in the occidental world, was born near Bukhārā in the year 370 AH/980. When Ibn Sīnā was five years old he and his family moved to the city of Bukhārā, where the young boy had a greater opportunity to study. At the age of ten he already knew grammar, literature, and theology as well as the whole of the Qur'an. When the famous mathematician, Abū 'Abdullāh al-Natīlī, came to Bukhārā, he was invited to stay at the house of Ibn Sīnā in order to teach him mathematics. Under his tutelage Ibn Sīnā mastered the *Almagest*, the *Elements of Euclid* and some logic, all of which he soon knew better than his teacher. Having mastered mathematics, he then turned his attention to physics, metaphysics, and medicine. By the time he was sixteen, Ibn Sīnā had mastered all the sciences of his day and was well known as a physician. In another two years, thanks to the commentary of al-Fārābī, he was also to complete his understanding of Aristotle's metaphysics which at first had presented considerable difficulty for him. Despite the loss in part or *in toto* of several of his major works, such as the twenty-volume *Kitāb al-Insāf* on the arbitration of Eastern and Western philosophy and the *Lisān al-'Arab* in ten volumes, over two-hundred and fifty books, treatises, and letters of Ibn Sīnā have survived. They range from the voluminous *Kitāb ash-Shifā* and *Al-Qānūn fi 't-Ṭibb* to treatises of only a few pages like *Risālat al-Fi'l wal-Infi'āl* and *Risālah fi's-Sirr al-Qadar*. His books can be roughly divided into four separate groups: the philosophical, religious, cosmological and physical, and finally the symbolical and

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and Ṣadr ad-Dīn Shīrāzī, well known as Mullā Ṣadrā.[2] Islamic philosophy deals not only with the common and prevailing subjects in Greek philosophy but also with subjects that are not covered by Greek philosophers. The most important of these are the issues of Resurrection [*ma'ād*] and prophethood [*nubuwwah*]. The philosophical discussion on prophethood focuses more on divine revelation, but there is also an examination of the necessity of sending prophets as the conveyers of the divine revelation. The approach

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metaphysical narratives. *Kitāb ash-Shifā*, a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, is probably the largest work of its kind ever written by one man. His dominating influence in medicine, philosophy and theology has lasted over the ages and is still alive within the circles of Islamic thought. [Trans.]

1- A towering figure of the Illuminationist School of Islamic Philosophy [*ishrāqī*], Shahāb ad-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī (known as Shaykh al-Ishrāq), was born in Suhraward, near Zanjān, Iran in 1155. After studying in Iṣfahān, a leading center of Islamic scholarship, Suhrawardī traveled through Iran, Anatolia and Syria. Influenced by mystical teachings, he spent much time in meditation and seclusion, and in Halab (modern Aleppo) he favorably impressed its ruler, Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir. His teachings, however, aroused the opposition of established and learned religious men [*'ulamā*], who persuaded Malik to have him put to death. The appellation *al-Maqtūl* [the killed one] meant that he was not to be considered a *shahīd* [martyr]. Suhrawardī wrote voluminously. The more than 50 works that were attributed to him were classified into two categories: doctrinal and philosophical accounts containing commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Plato, as well as his contribution to the Illuminationist School; and shorter treatises, generally written in Persian and of an esoteric nature, meant to illustrate the paths and journeys of a mystic before he could achieve *ma'rifah* (gnosis or esoteric knowledge). [Trans.]

2- Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050 AH/1640), also called Ṣadruddīn Shīrāzī and Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, was a philosopher who led the Iranian cultural renaissance in the 17th century. The foremost representative of Ishrāqī [Illuminationist] School of philosopher-mystics, he is commonly regarded by Iranians as the greatest philosopher of Iran. A scion of a notable Shīrāzī family, Mullā Ṣadrā completed his education in Iṣfahān, then the leading cultural and intellectual center of Iran. After his studies with scholars there, he produced several works, the most famous of which was his *Asfār* (Journeys). *Asfār* contains the bulk of his philosophy, which was influenced by a personal mysticism bordering on asceticism that he experienced during a 15-year retreat at Kahak, a village near Qum in Iran. Toward the end of his life, Mullā Ṣadrā returned to Shīrāz to teach. His teachings, however, were considered heretical by the orthodox Shī'ah theologians, who persecuted him, though his powerful family connections permitted him to continue to write. He died on a pilgrimage to Mecca. [Trans.]

which is labeled "proof of general guidance" [*burhān-e hidāyat-e ʻāmmeh*] is a legacy of Muslim philosophers in this field.[1]

In this section of the book, we shall present the following arguments:

1. Wherever you look at the infinite creation of God, in addition to the order of existence you can also observe a sort of open and hidden guidance and direction everywhere. The order of a being shows the organization and coordination of its different components and the absence of contradiction and conflict. However, its guidance means that God has directed it towards a certain destination. God has not created contingent beings [*mawjūdāt-e imkānī*] just to be abandoned later. Rather, apart from designing an order or system of creation, He has provided a sort of guidance according to the natural constitution of each being:

﴿ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى ﴾

> *"Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it."*[2]

God created the honeybee and then taught it a wonderful system of livelihood and attainment of perfection. If we try to liken the honeybee's system of life to a strong and organized ship, the instincts which are actually God's inspirations [*ilhām*] serve as the captain who will direct it toward its predefined destination:

﴿ وَأَوْحَى رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ﴾

> *"And your Lord inspired the bee [saying]: 'Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and the trellises that they erect'."*[1]

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[1] See Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, under the commentary of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:213. See also Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Nubuwwat* [*Prophethood*] in *Majmū'eh-ye Āthār* [*Anthology of Muṭahharī's Works*], vol. 4, p. 398.

[2] *Sūrah Ṭā Ḥā* 20:50. In this volume, the translation of Qur'anic passages is adapted from Sayyid 'Alī Qulī Qarā'ī, *The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004). [Trans.]

One plants a delicate seed and after sometime it grows, becomes a tree and bears sweet and nutritious fruit. Certainly, inside the small seed are wonderful elements that remain there until it becomes a full grown tree. In every living thing, there is a sort of program that guides its life through the rocky roads of the material or natural world—which is the arena of struggle and conflict—to a certain destination. Muslim philosophers have called this "the principle of general guidance" [*aṣl-e hidāyat-e 'āmmeh*].

It is said that the credibility of the above mentioned principle is not anchored in a defective inductive reasoning or limited observation, but rather on a proof that bespeaks of the existence of a motive and purpose in the creation of every creature or thing. The reason behind this is that God is All-wise and He does not do anything futile or useless:

﴿ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ ﴾

> *"We did not create the sky and the earth and whatever is between them in vain. That is a conjecture of the faithless. So woe to the faithless on account of the Fire!"*[2]

If God did not guide living things to their ideal destinations according to their natural constitutions, their lives would consist of aimlessness and lack of purpose, whereas futility and vainness is unbecoming of Allah.

Like other creatures, human beings are enveloped in God's mercy and guidance for there is surely a purpose in his creation:

﴿ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴾

> *"Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?"*[3]

Yes, anyone who acknowledges [the existence of] God and believes in His power and wisdom has no doubt about the soundness of the *proof*

1- *Sūrah Naḥl* 16:68.
2- *Sūrah Ṣād* 38:27.
3- *Sūrah Mu'minūn* 23:115.

of general guidance. Is there any doubt about a principle which the Qur'an explicitly affirms?

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُواْ اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُواْ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ﴾

> *"They did not regard Allah with the regard due to Him when they said, 'Allah has not sent down anything to any human'."*[1]

This verse bears witness to the fact that due recognition of God necessitates acknowledgment and recognition of His general guidance and direction especially His intervention in the lives of humankind.

2. Guidance is commensurate to the faculties and potentials of every being. Stones and other inanimate objects are guided according to certain mechanical laws. Having a more complex structure, the plants also have a more perfect sort of guidance, while the animals are guided by their instincts.

Among all creatures, humans occupy the highest station. Like the shell, the human being is an animal that has a precious gem within. In appearance, the human being resembles other animals, but in addition he has a divine spirit that bears a heavy burden of trust:

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ * فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُواْ لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾

> *"When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am going to create a human out of dry clay [drawn] from an aging mud. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him'."*[2]

Like other animals, man has instinctive guidance for his physical growth and perfection and lives and develops by following that instinctive guidance.

Yet, the divine spirit on which rational human life depends has endowed man with an important advantage and that is the element of freewill or volition [*ikhtīyār*]. Unlike other animals, man is not an innate prisoner of his instincts for he can overcome their influence. He can even regulate his instincts and desires to be at the service of his intellect or reason.

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[1] *Sūrah An'ām* 6:91.

[2] *Sūrah Ḥijr* 15:28-29.

Of course, such a creature requires access to a sort of guidance which is consistent with his freewill.

Aristotle says:

> "We must not follow those who tell us that since we are humans, we must think of things human, and since we are mortals, we must engage in transient affairs. Rather, as far as possible, we must make ourselves immortal and we must try our best to live consistent with the best thing (intellect) within us."[1]

Yet, how is it that we can make ourselves immortal and think of eternity? Is it possible except by way of divine revelation? In the absence of divine revelation, it is not possible to attain eternal happiness.

Of course God, who has not spared creating eyebrow and eyelash—which have lower albeit vital functions in the lives of human beings—does not also spare sending prophets in which lie the survival of the human race and the eternal happiness of every person.[2]

3. It is true that the "*principle of general guidance*" emphasizes the guidance of humanity toward eternal salvation in the hereafter; however, since worldly life is the preliminary stage of this guidance, leadership and direction in the affairs related to life in the world are among the tasks of the prophets (*'a*). In this connection, it is usually emphasized that social life, which is the foundation of human civilization, is only possible under the auspices of revealed teachings. If there had been no historical record of the existence of prophets, there would also have been no trace of human civilization. Collective life is only possible with the existence of just laws and moral upbringing which in turn emanate from revealed teachings.

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[1] Quoted in Marta Nusham (?), *Aristotle*, trans. 'Izzat Allāh Fūlādvand, p. 99. It can be said that Aristotle alludes to those who say that man is flesh, skin and blood and nothing else, and the perfection of human life must be sought in the same animalistic life.

[2] Ibn Sīnā, *Ash-Shifā*, Theology Section, p. 44.

If legislative authority had been delegated solely to humans, they would not have taken true justice into consideration and would have enacted laws according to material and personal interests. Moreover, in the absence of superior morality, which is only possible through faith in God and the hereafter, the existence of just laws cannot contribute to the perpetuity of society and serve as the groundwork for material welfare in this world as well as perfection and happiness in the next world. Given the urgent need of mankind for divine guidance and the *principle of general guidance*, the necessity of the mission [*bi'that*] of the prophets (*'a*) and their presence in human society is so evident that it cannot be denied.

Those who assert that the interests of humanity in this world do not need prophetic teachings because we presently witness civilizations devoid of revealed teachings and founded on atheism have ignored the following points:

Firstly, notwithstanding a verbal denial in terms of beliefs and moral principles, humankind of today is in fact deeply indebted to the prophets (*'a*). There are many religious virtues that hold various societies intact which are actually products of the prophets' (*'a*) efforts. When looking at history it is clear that humanity has benefited much from the teachings of the prophets (*'a*). Without the teachings of the prophets would humankind have a stable collective life or would people lead a more bestial life in which right and value would be the slaves of power and might.[1]

Secondly, Muslim philosophers do not claim that without the existence of the prophets (*'a*) and their teachings, no society could be founded whatsoever. They are rather referring to a society which serves as the grounds for human perfection and eternal bliss in the hereafter.[2] What rational person can claim that without the guidance of God he can enact a code of law which is not only just and guarantees the perpetuity of human race in this world but is also codified in such a manner that it ensures eternal happiness and felicity in the next world? Only the prophets (*'a*) can teach the members of society and train them such that they would observe the rights of others completely. Only the prophets (*'a*) can reform man, send him back to his original nature which is God's spirit, and make him immortal by the grace and mercy of God:

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[1] For more information see Muṭahharī, *Nubuwwat* in *Majmū'eh-ye Āthār*, vol. 4, pp. 351, 364.

[2] 'Abd ar-Razzāq Lāhījī, *Guzīdeh-ye Gūhar-e Murād*, ed. Ṣamad Muwaḥḥid, p. 252.

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ * وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

> *"It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error. And to others from among them [as well] who have not yet joined them."*[1]

Some notes

1. In addition to their holy scripture (the Qur'an), the Muslims have access to a great literary corpus called *Sunnah*. In general, *Sunnah* refers to the recorded narrations [*riwāyāt*] of the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*)[2] and infallible Imāms (*'a*). A considerable section of these narrations explains practical laws on the individual and collective life but many narrations also expound ideological tenets and even deal with the natural world and humanity.

The issue of the necessity of prophethood and the blessings of the prophets has been also reflected in numerous narrations. Here, it suffices to mention two narrations. From the following two narrations, it can be discerned to what extent the writings of philosophers and theologians in this regard are indebted to the *Sunnah*.

a. In reply to someone who asked for a proof of prophethood, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (*'a*) said:

1- *Sūrah Jum'ah* 62:2-3.

2- The abbreviation, "*ṣ*", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa ālihi wa sallam* [may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*). [Trans.]

"As we have proven that God, the All-wise, is our Creator who is Most Sublime and Exalted to be comprehended and communicated by anyone, we know that there must be prophets among the people to speak on His behalf, express His will and guide the people about what is good and bad on which depend their fate. So, there must be bidders and forbidders who are none other than the prophets (*'a*)."[1]

b. In Sermon 1 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*,[2] Imām 'Alī (*'a*) said:

فَبَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رُسُلَهُ، وَوَاتَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْبِيَاءَهُ، لِيَسْتَأْدُوهُمْ مِيثَاقَ فِطْرَتِهِ، وَيُذَكِّرُوهُمْ مَنْسِيَّ نِعْمَتِهِ، وَيَحْتَجُّوا عَلَيْهِمْ بِالتَّبْلِيغِ، وَيُثِيرُوا لَهُمْ دَفَائِنَ الْعُقُولِ، وَيُرُوهُمْ آيَاتِ الْمَقْدِرَةِ: مِنْ سَقْفٍ فَوْقَهُمْ مَرْفُوعٍ، وَمِهَادٍ تَحْتَهُمْ مَوْضُوعٍ، وَمَعَايِشَ تُحْيِيهِمْ، وَآجَالٍ تُفْنِيهِمْ، وَأَوْصَابٍ تُهْرِمُهُمْ، وَأَحْدَاثٍ تَتَابَعُ عَلَيْهِمْ.

"Then Allah sent His Messengers and a series of His prophets towards them to get them to fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence namely the sky which is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, means of living that sustain them, death which brings an end to everything, ailments that turn them old and incidents that successively betake them!"[3]

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[1] *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 168 (with slight modification).

[2] *Nahj al-Balāghah* (The Peak of Eloquence) is a collection of speeches, sayings and letters of the Commander of the Faithful, Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (*'a*) compiled by Sharīf ar-Raḍī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 406 AH/1016). The contents of the book concern the three essential topics of God, man and the universe, and include comments on scientific, literary, social, ethical, and political issues. With the exception of the words of the Glorious Qur'an and of the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*), no words of man can equal it in eloquence. So far, more than 101 exegeses have been written on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, indicating the importance of this treatise to scholars and learned men of research and investigation. For more information, visit: http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul. [Trans.]

[3] Syed 'Ali Raza, *Nahj al-Balāghah: The Peak of Eloquence* (Qum: Foundation of Islamic Cultural Propagation in the World, 1995), Sermon 1. [Trans.]

2. Both philosophical and theological arguments show the intellect's limitations in identifying the rational and humane way of life which raises man above the bestial form of living. These limitations are more evident with respect to the otherworldly life which is beyond comprehension of the intellect.

However, the limitations of the intellect do not negate its value and credibility. It is only in comparison with the extensive needs of humanity that we talk about the limitations of the intellect. Similarly, whenever we talk about the insufficiency of the senses, this does not mean we deny their exceptional cognitive functions. Everyone knows that in the absence of the senses, the intellect or reason cannot function properly. Conversely, without the intellect the senses cannot function at all. The same is true in the case of reason [*'aql*] and revelation [*waḥī*]. Reason is kindled under the auspices of revelation. Without the latter, the former will wander in the valley of the unknown. Meanwhile, it is also by the hint of reason that revelation is welcomed, and it is in the hearts of those who apply reason that the tree of revelation bears fruit:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ ﴾

> *"Only those of Allah's servants having knowledge fear Him."*[1]

> "Reason [*'aql*] and religious law [*shar'*]have no option [but to acknowledge] that reason is the basis or foundation while religious law is the structure. A structure without foundation is baseless while a foundation without any structure is useless."[2]

In the words of a Christian theologian, Ian Barbour, "Revelation does not negate reason but rather develops it. Reflection and research could be compatible with religious commitment."[3]

1- *Sūrah Fāṭir* (or *al-Malā'ikah*) 35:28.

2- *Risālah Hidāyah aṭ-Ṭālibiyyīn* in the anthology of treatises of the great philosopher Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī, introduced and edited by Sayyid Jalāl Ashtiyānī, p. 10.

3- Ian Barbour, *'Ilm va Dīn [Science and Religion]*, trans. Bahā'uddīn Khurramshāhī, p. 305.

Ian G. Barbour (1923-) is an American scholar of the relationship between science and religion whose 1989-91 Gifford Lectures yielded the widely recognized texts,

3. It is sometimes assumed that the concept of "the necessity of doing an action" cannot be applied to God on the grounds that accepting such necessity implies setting a duty for Him to discharge and it does not behoove Him to be *obligated* by others. Therefore, what do we really mean by saying that—it is '*incumbent upon*' or '*necessary*' for God to send down prophets? Do we want to set *dos* and *don'ts* for God?! For this reason, the Ash'arites [*Ashā'irah*] have entirely avoided discussing the necessity of prophethood.

4. What is meant by the necessity for God to *do an action* is that the human intellect or reason understands the continuity of this action within the context of the will of God and perceives God as the Doer of the action. For example, when we say that God is the Necessary Being [*wājib al-wujūd*] it means that the Being cannot be separated or detached from the Divine Essence [*dhāt-e ilāhī*]. When we say that it is necessary for God to send down prophets, it means nothing except that God is All-wise and so benevolent to humanity that it is impossible for Him not to send prophets.[1]

Religion in an Age of Science (1990) and *Ethics in an Age of Technology* (1993). His earlier *Issues in Science and Religion* (1965), widely acclaimed as a groundbreaking volume, discussed the relationship of religious thought to the history, methods, and theories of science. As a physicist and theologian, Barbour was awarded the Templeton Prize in 1999 for Progress in Religion in recognition of his efforts to create a dialogue between the worlds of science and religion. [Trans.]

[1] Muṭahharī, *Nubuwwat* in *Majmū'eh-ye Āthār*, vol. 4, p. 365. For in-depth discussion on the meaning of "necessity" with respect to God, see Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 14, p. 94.

Section Two

The Contributions and Blessings of the Prophets

General Objectives

After studying this discourse, students are expected:

1. To be acquainted with the contributions and blessings of the prophets ('a) in the domains of science, ethics, social justice, and mysticism; and
2. To realize the status of knowledge in religion and to be informed about the various approaches concerning the relationship between science and religion.

In the discussion on the necessity of prophethood, we pointed out a set of blessings of prophethood the absence of which would indicate failure in the guidance and deliverance of man or at least would make it very difficult for man to tread the path of felicity. Now, we shall make an overview of the blessings of the prophets which facilitate wayfaring in the valley of deliverance in this world and the hereafter.

The prophets and morality

Ethics or morality [*akhlāq*] which is one of the perennial foundations of human life has always been observed. It is so valuable that even those who are practically deprived of it verbally praise and wish to have it.

Within ethics there is discussion about voluntary actions and man's psychological judgment on their being good or bad, mandatory or not mandatory.

As the spokespersons of religion, the prophets (*'a*) have a pivotal role and contribution within the domain of ethics. Some functions of the prophets (*'a*) and divine revelation in the domain of ethics are related to the identification of the goodness or badness of man's volitional actions and states. The function of revelation is to introduce and identify truths. Revelation expounds in detail what the intellect generally perceives.

In addition to this, the prophets (*'a*) and revelation have another vital role or function which is related to moral training. This role or function manifests itself in two ways:

1. Divine revelation facilitates moral training and development. That is, because it regards moral actions in this world as the preconditions for happiness and prosperity in the next world, it encourages progress in this regard. In fact, eternal happiness and prosperity is a reflection of the moral actions or righteous deeds of the world.

2. Through their actions, the prophets (*'a*) set perfect examples for mankind and pave the necessary practical grounds for moral training.

Those who are acquainted with affairs related to upbringing, training and education know the extent of the necessity of functional models for the moral training of humankind. The lives of the prophets (*'a*) demonstrated practical models for their respective communities. Through their innate attractive qualities, they guided their people toward their well-being and deliverance:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ ﴾

> *"In the Apostle of Allah there is certainly for you a good example."*[1]

Yes, the intellect and intellectuals have a role or contribution in promoting morality, but intellectual language (philosophy) is not clear, expressive and attractive enough for the common people. As such, human history has always owed its greatest moral achievements to the prophets (*'a*) for they were the ones who imparted moral teachings to the common people in simple language. It is the last of the prophets who explicitly said: "Indeed I have been sent to perfect moral values."[2] He (*ṣ*) also said: "Indeed I have been chosen for the perfection of good deeds."[3]

The efforts of philosophers in searching for moral principles and those of moral teachers in identifying moral affairs cannot be denied, but if human history were devoid of the presence of the prophets (*'a*) the

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1- *Sūrah Aḥzāb* 33:21.

2- *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 11, p. 420, *ḥadīth* 31969.

3- Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, p. 192.

discussion on ethics would be confined to the four walls of the classroom and there would be no indication of the common people's reception to it. Since the edifice of civilization lies in morality, it can be imagined to what extent the different civilizations of the world are indebted to the teachings of the prophets (*'a*) and their actual conduct in life.

The prophets and knowledge

Nowadays, science is a great facet with a crucial role in the life of humanity. At the present time, the word "science" refers primarily to the empirical sciences which are divided into two areas: (1) natural sciences and (2) social sciences and humanities. In the past, different types of knowledge were all under the rubric of "philosophy" which means "love of knowledge," and *'ilm* [knowledge or science] was understood in its general sense and it included every science or branch of knowledge. As such, we shall assess in this book the contributions of the prophets (*'a*) to *'ilm* in its general sense, i.e. "knowledge", and also examine their influence—and basically the relationship between science and religion—to *'ilm* in its new sense, i.e. "empirical sciences."

1. The prophets (*'a*) and knowledge: Under the motto of teaching and training, the prophets (*'a*) have always embarked upon propagating the religion and conveying the divine message. They exerted most of their efforts in removing the obstacles along the way of 'search for knowledge'. The prophets (*'a*) were often hated because of their incessant struggle against ignorance, superstition and blind following.

> "No prophet has come with a mission other than inviting his people to desist from blindly following their forefathers and the ancients, asking them to reflect and freeing them from the bondage of dominant or prevailing unpleasant traditions."[1]

The following famous account is familiar to all. One day the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) saw two groups in the mosque—one group was busy in worship and devotional acts, and the other was engaged in learning and seeking knowledge. By conveying a hint that showed the value of knowledge in the sight of the prophets (*'a*), he expressed more pleasure towards the group that was engaged in learning and seeking knowledge.

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[1] Muṭahharī, *Nubuwwat* in *Majmū'eh-ye Āthār*, vol. 4, p. 36.

Yes, the learned and the ignorant are not equal and in the religious value system; the learned, on account of the knowledge they possess, are always superior to the ignorant. Even a little knowledge of religious teachings and principles is an indication of literacy and love of knowledge, and everyone must know that religion is not a hindrance to knowledge but rather its vanguard. How could the religion whose motto is, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" encourage ignorance, illiteracy and blind following?

The following statement of the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) to Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (*'a*) in this regard is quite interesting:

> "O 'Alī! In the race for nearness to God, if you mount the horse of knowledge, learning and reflection, you will be ahead of everybody including those who hasten toward God by means of worship, prayer and fasting, and you will attain divine proximity."[1]

2. The prophets (*'a*) and empirical sciences: To know and understand properly the positions of science and religion is so important for us. Alfred North Whitehead,[2] a great mathematician and philosopher of the 20th century, says:

> "When we reflect on the value and importance of religion and science for mankind, it is not absurd to say that the future course of history depends on this generation's treatment of the relationship between these two."[3]

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[1] Ibn Sīnā, *Risālah Mi'rājiyyah*, n. p.

[2] Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947): a British mathematician and metaphysician, and generally recognized as one of the greatest 20th-century philosophers. His collaboration with his former pupil, the British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell, in writing the three-volume *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) produced one of the world's greatest works on logic and mathematics. [Trans.]

[3] Quoted in Barbour, *'Ilm va Dīn*, p. 13.

Before mentioning the different viewpoints on the relationship between science and religion, it is necessary to note that man is in need of religion as well as science. Any perspective on man not being in need of both religion and science is inconsistent with the reality of man. Throughout history, there have been those who have striven to observe natural phenomena and explain them based on religion and also search for the source of natural laws from the Bible. Sometimes, contributions in this context were even treated unkindly. An illustrious example of these oppositions was the case of Galileo whose scientific theory that the sun was the center of the universe—in opposition to the then prevailing Ptolemaic geocentrism—was strongly condemned by the ecclesiastical authority.

Under the pretext of religion, if we want to assume that human beings are not in need of empirical sciences and ignore their scientific efforts, it will bring nothing except darkness, ignorance and Bedouin life. Have not those who regard science thus in the name of religion read the Qur'an which invites us repeatedly to the study nature?

﴿ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ﴾

> *"Say: Travel over the land and then observe how He has originated the creation"*[1]

﴿ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

> *"There is indeed a sign in that (the life of the bees) for a people who reflect."*[2]

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

> *"Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who possess intellects."*[3]

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[1] 1- *Sūrah 'Ankabūt* 29:20.

[2] 2- *Sūrah Naḥl* 16:69.

[3] 3- *Sūrah Āli 'Imrān* 3:190-191, 193.

Therefore, religion does not seek to replace or put an end to scientific theories. In fact, encouragement to learn the natural sciences is an integral part of correct religious teachings.

Regrettably though, by excessive reliance on science under the pretext of progress in empirical sciences, some have imposed restrictions on religion and regarded mankind as needless of religion in this age of scientific progress and development. Scientism has so much rubbed some of discernment that they have not only been deprived of proper understanding of religion and its role in their lives, but they have also lost sight of their object of worship (i.e. science as it must be known and its jurisdiction and limitations). This notion that science is the panacea to all problems of humankind was at its peak during the Renaissance and the scientific revolution and even now some still believe in it.

According to this idea, anything that cannot be empirically tested is meaningless and has no truth-value. Hence, religious claims such as the existence of God, angels and the Resurrection are all claims devoid of any truth-value for they cannot be put to experiment. Accordingly, even if religion once had a role in the life of humanity, it had already played its role and its period has expired.

Of course, scientific empiricism is not that prominent at present. Natural scientists acknowledge that the foundations of the sciences are elements that cannot be empirically tested. They emphasize that many scientific principles are actually derived from religion. According to these scientists, by emphasizing the reality of nature, the inherent unity of its different facets, the possibility of discovering its laws, and the status or station of nature as a reflection of divine knowledge, it is religion which has provided the necessary points of departure for the formation of science in the life of humankind.[1]

Science is indebted to religion more than is imagined or generally accepted. It is religion which considers nature as a mirror to know

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[1] For further information about this theory that the foundations of science are based upon religious teachings, see Michael Peterson, et al, *'Aql va I'tiqād Dīnī [Reason and Religious Belief]*, trans. Aḥmad Narāqī and Ibrāhīm Sulṭānī, p. 383.

God, encouraging and giving us hope to know Him and helping us in seeking knowledge at the threshold of religious civilizations.

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذا بَاطِلاً سُبْحَانَكَ ﴾

"Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say], 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You!'"[1]

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلاَفِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي
فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاء مِن مَّاء فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ
مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخِّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاء
وَالأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

"Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail at sea with profit to men, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky—with which He revives the earth after its death, and scatters therein every kind of animal—and the changing of the winds, and the clouds disposed between the sky and the earth, are surely signs for a people who apply reason."[2]

Moreover, if ever mankind hoped that science would solve all human problems during the past two centuries, today it has fully realized that it has not only failed to solve all problems but rather it has brought about even more serious problems. Progress in physics has heightened universal concern about destructive nuclear wars. Advanced production technologies have created worry about rapid environmental destruction. Worse still, technology has caused apprehension that humanity is now exploiting the divine blessings (natural resources) that belong to the human race at a rate that will deplete these non-renewable reserves.

1- *Sūrah Āli 'Imrān* 3:191.

2- *Sūrah Baqarah* 2:164.

In any case, science is no more that 'deity' that attracts scientists from all persuasions. Today, the need to pay closer attention to the role of religion in life and even its role in establishing scientific foundations and restrictions has been heeded and acknowledged by many scientists. As such, we must have a balanced view and understanding of the role and function of religion and science and place each of them in its own domain.

There are three views regarding the relationship between religion and science as follows:

1. ***Science and religion are two opposing poles.*** Some imagine that science and religion are rivals and that if religion flourishes it will have an arbitrary effect on science and vice versa. Unfortunately, it cannot be denied that the improper attitude of the clergy—particularly during the Middle Ages—in dealing with science has strengthened the rationale behind this notion.

The basic assumption here is that religion, like empirical sciences, aims at discovering natural laws. However, in most cases the ever-changing scientific views are at odds with some immutable religious accounts especially about the natural world. The Christian Bible, according to the church leaders, supports the geocentric notion that the earth is the center of the universe, while science has acknowledged the sun as the center of the universe (solar system). As another example, religion endorses the theory of fixed creation of species while science allegedly talks about the evolution of species.

Those who enjoyed the utilities of science and considered them to be in conflict with religion denied the latter. It is said that whenever a person turns away from the true religion, another thing or a set of things will pose as "religion" though it may not explicitly assume the name "religion". At our present period, some have replaced religion with science. The reason behind this is insufficient knowledge of the true religion and the reality of the world, which is marred with hundreds of mistakes.

2. ***Science and religion are two parallel lines that do not intersect each other.*** The contention of those who cannot agree with the setting aside of religion in the domain of life is that religion and science are two different and separate things and have their own specific yet different functions and utilities. As such, any contradiction between

them is baseless. Contradiction between two things happens when they deal with a single subject and give different opinions about it. However, if the subject, goal and even method of one are different from that of the other, conflict between them will never happen. The basic assumption here is that the function of science is to explain natural events through observation and experiment in order to predict future events and gain supremacy over nature. In contrast, the function of religion is totally different and applicable somewhere else.

Carl Bart, a Protestant theologian, believed that theology and science dealt with basically different subjects. The subject of theology was the manifestation of God in Christ while that of science was the natural world. The Almighty God could only be known through His manifestation while nature was known through the human intellect.

Existentialist philosophers usually regard scientific knowledge as objective and impersonal and religious knowledge as profoundly personal and subjective. The subject of science is material objects and their roles and functions while the subject of religion is personal and moral realities.

Hermeneutists treat religion and science as two different linguistic games, each of which has been programmed for a specific goal. The goal of the scientific language is generally prediction and control while the language of religion is used for purposes like prayer and peace of mind.[1]

In any case, those who believe in the basic distinction between religion and science—as well as the subject, method and goal of each of them—try to bring back again religion in the life of man after being sidetracked by those who believe in their conflicting nature and assign a role to it which is different from that of science.

3. ***Science and religion are complimentary.*** In recent years, some have claimed that it is possible for religion and science to have a single subject while each has its own goal or aim. They do not accept that the subject of one must be different from that of the other, arguing that in many cases, religion has also dealt with natural events. Having an identical subject does not bring about any conflict between them

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1- Peterson, et al, *'Aql va I'tiqād Dīnī*, p. 366.

even though the religious explanation of a natural event may be quite different from the scientific explanation. For example, there may be two different explanations of an advertisement billboard posted at a library. One explanation may be concerned with the billboard's quality and the like while the other explanation's concern may be the intention of the billboard's owner for displaying it. Both explanations pertain to one and the same thing but, since they have different goals, no contradiction between them arises. In fact, the explanations are complimentary.

Those who believe that science and religion are complimentary have asserted that whenever religion talks about the natural world, the purpose is to unravel the *meaning* and *implications* of natural events while science is concerned with the *causes* of natural events.

If we pay careful attention to these three views, one thing seems to be common in all of them and that is that religion does not talk about the *causes* of natural events. When religion discusses nature, it pertains to the significance and *implications* of real events—the main motive in any religious message is to highlight the *meaning* of events. For this reason, the Holy Qur'an considers events in the world as "signs" [*āyāt*] which show the power, knowledge and grace of God. It is said that the phenomena in the world are all "beauties" [*jamalāt*] which suggests that they are all linked to God and orient us back to Him—the origin of all beauty.

However, negligence of one important and fundamental point has led to a misunderstanding regarding the relationship between science and religion, and that point is that sometimes religion does actually discuss the *causes* of things and events—just as science does. Religion has mentioned the manner of the occurrence of rain, currents of rain, etc. Discussion of the meaning of events is not in conflict with examination of their causes. This is basically the distinctive feature of the religious worldview—to link meanings and ideals with events in the world and reflect them in the fundamental realities of the universe. It must not be overlooked, therefore, that some religious textual accounts do indeed have scientific relevance.

In such an interpretation of religion, there is the possibility of lack of harmony between a "religious account" and a "scientific finding". In reply, it must be stated that there must always be a logical explanation for conflict between these two, and there are ways that harmony can be established. One way is to interpret religious texts as much as permissible so that they are understood in the proper context. Another method is to realize that scientific theories are mixed with speculation and need for further investigation. To pay heed to these two points is enough reason not to take these alleged contradictions between science and religion too seriously.

A more fundamental and important point is that the many contradictions between the Bible and science cannot be applied to the Qur'an. Perhaps, one of the reasons behind the occurrence of contradiction between science and religion in Christianity is the distortions [*taḥrīf*] made to the Bible and this blemish has not been able to taint the Qur'an with regard to science.

Many testimonies have been made and books written about the compatibility of the Qur'anic verses with scientific findings. It is clear that far from being based on realities, this alleged contradiction between science and religion derives from the conflict between religion and scientism, as well as the clash between science, and religious intransigence and narrow-mindedness. As such, belief in any sort of contradiction between religion and knowledge has no benefit except hindering scientific progress and undermining the credibility of religion, while perfect harmony and compatibility exists between the two.

All basic scientific presumptions have flourished and gained acceptance under the auspices of Islamic teachings and perhaps the following saying of Imām 'Alī (*'a*) points to this indisputable truth:

> "The life of knowledge lies on faith."[1]

The prophets and social justice

One of the proofs advanced by Muslim philosophers regarding the necessity of prophethood and the existence of prophets (*'a*) is the necessity of the implementation of just laws in society so that the people can live in peace and tranquility:

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[1] *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Subḥī Ṣāliḥ), Sermon 156, p. 219.

﴿ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ﴾

> *"Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice."*[1]

However, the prophets (*'a*) have a further role in the implementation of justice and that is their incessant struggle against tyrants and oppressors, which sometimes had led to their persecution or their martyrdoms.

Many accounts of the prophets' (*'a*) confrontations with the oppressors of their respective times, from which we can learn so many lessons, have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. These struggles against oppression taught lessons of martyrdom and bravery to others and gave a religious and ideological color to their confrontations so as to remove forever the notion that their struggles for justice were for worldly purposes from the minds of comfort-seekers who urged people to keep silent under all conditions.

The prophets and mysticism

Having the splendid celestial fragrance, the prophets (*'a*) have enlivened the sacred emotions of humanity, elevated the emotions and feelings beyond the level of animal instincts, and opened the windows of the Unseen [*ghayb*] and celestial world [*malakūt*]. The greatest mystical discovery and intuition have occurred in the midst of religious civilizations. Certainly, had it not been for the efforts of the prophets (*'a*) in fostering fondness and familiarity between celestial beings and mortals, humankind could not have sensed the aroma of the unseen by the use of his intellect and perceptions.

The Lord of the prophets (*'a*) is compassionate. He answers the call of anyone, anytime. He is nearer to man than his own jugular vein.[2] Such a God is always heart-ravishing for man. It is this very love of Him which is the driving force for humankind to seek His pleasure. God delivers humanity from bewilderment and confusion and informs of

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1- *Sūrah Ḥadīd* 57:25.

2- *Sūrah Qāf* 50:16: *"Certainly We have created man and We know to what his soul tempts him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein."* [Trans.]

the purpose behind creation. By doing so, God gives assurance, enthusiasm and interest in life. Belief in the Resurrection is not only belief in the immortality of the soul, but also a depiction of the physical existence of human beings in the next world which reflects the way they led their lives in this world. Therefore, mindfulness about and reflection upon the Resurrection play pivotal roles in dispelling hopelessness and despair in life.

The blessings brought by the prophets (*'a*) are far beyond that which could be written. So, we shall end our discussion here by citing an example of the manifestation of their blessings throughout history.

An example of the manifestation of the blessings of the prophets

The most recent event of the sending of prophets (*'a*) by God is related to the religion of Islam. Reflection on this event will lead to acknowledgment of what has been said. Islam was first propagated in the Ḥijāz[1] by the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*). The barren land of Ḥijāz had little trace of culture and civilization of its own. It was a land whose people used to describe in poetry their acts of aggression and plunder and vie with each other to gain reputation and glory. The people of Ḥijāz had neither clean water nor wholesome food. Out of ignorance and a spirit of infanticide, fathers would bury their innocent daughters so as to be safe from the enemies' taunt![2] In the Ḥijāz might was right. The emotional outbursts of the people expressed descriptions of things relevant to animal instincts not reports of spiritual experiences.

However, in the same land of Ḥijāz, there emerged men and women who not only found the way to salvation but also paved the necessary ground for the emergence of the great Islamic civilization by leading others to the path of guidance and salvation. Hearts which had no equal in hardness and darkness turned into sources of mystical intuitiveness and attracted people from every direction. The alchemy of the presence of the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) and the assistance of his devoted companions, especially the Master of the Monotheists [*mawlā al-muwaḥḥidīn*] 'Alī (*'a*), turned the copper of the existence of these people into pure gold:

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[1] Ḥijāz: the region in Western Arabia bordering the Red Sea that includes Ṭā'if, Mecca and Medina. [Trans.]

[2] It alludes to *Sūrah an-Naḥl* 16:58-59: *"When one of them is brought the news of a female [newborn], his face becomes darkened and he chokes with suppressed agony. He hides from the people out of distress at the news he has been brought: shall he retain it in humiliation, or bury it in the ground! Look! Evil is the judgment that they make."*

> *Yes, by the blessing of your kindness,*
> *The soil will turn into gold.*

Unfortunately, we cannot cover here all the dimensions of Islamic civilization whose seed sprouted in this very land (Ḥijāz) and whose branches and shoots extended to other lands. Even voluminous books and innumerable articles could not do the same.

Section Three

Revelation and Miracle

General Objectives

After studying this discourse, students are expected:

1. To understand the difference between revelation [*waḥī*], intuition [*kashf*] and witnessing [*shuhūd*] by familiarizing themselves with the salient features and types of revelation;

2. To be acquainted with miracles performed by a prophet [*a'jazah* or *mu'jizah*] and the difference between these and miracles performed by a non-prophet [*kirāmah*] and supernatural affairs, and also the connection between miracles and the truthfulness of the prophets, specifically the miracle of the Qur'an; and lastly

3. To know, through a theoretical analysis, the reason behind the finality of prophethood and the way and manner of continuity of man's movement towards perfection.

Revelation

Every community or nation has witnessed the call of the prophets (*'a*) and this call has been necessary and essential. As demonstrated earlier, the intellect can also perceive this necessity. Now, some questions come up that, in spite of their being human beings, how did the prophets (*'a*) communicate with God and how did they receive His message?

Many people have regarded the idea of creatures communicating with the Creator as one of the unbelievable things:

﴿ أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ قَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴾

Does it seem odd to these people that We have revealed to a man from among themselves, [declaring], 'Warn mankind, and

> *give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord'? The faithless say, 'This is indeed a plain magician'.*[1]

The Holy Qur'an describes God's messages to the prophets (*'a*) as "revelation" [*waḥī*]. *Waḥī* means to impart something in secret. This word is applied in many cases in the Qur'an. This term is sometimes used to reference common individuals:

﴿ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى أُمِّ مُوسَى أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾

> *"We revealed to Moses' mother, [saying], 'Nurse him; then, when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear nor grieve, for We will restore him to you and make him one of the apostles."*[2]

There are also times when it is applied to animals:

﴿ وَأَوْحَى رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴾

> *"And your Lord revealed to the bee [saying]: Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and the trellises that they erect."*[3]

Even inanimate objects sometimes receive "divine revelation":

﴿ يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا * بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَى لَهَا ﴾

> *"On that day she (the earth) will relate her chronicles for her Lord will have inspired her."*[4]

The meaning of *waḥī* common in all these verses is "guidance or instruction which is hidden from others." God "guides" the mother of Mūsā (Moses) (*'a*), the honeybee and the earth, but we do not fully understand the nature of this "guidance". Of course, in every case the divine revelation assumes a particular form in consonance with its recipient.

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[1] *Sūrah Yūnus* 10:2.

[2] *Sūrah Qaṣaṣ* 28:7.

[3] *Sūrah Naḥl* 16:68.

[4] *Sūrah Zalzalah* 99:4-5.

There is also the guidance for mankind through revelation to special individuals chosen for this purpose:

﴿ إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ
وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ﴾

> *"We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and [as] We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon—and We gave David the Psalms."*[1]

Our analysis or knowledge of revelation is only based on the prophets' (*'a*) descriptions of it. To have faith in revelation, which is an essential prerequisite of Islam, does not require complete knowledge of it. To believe in it and the prophets' (*'a*) claim to it is enough. Of course, understanding and knowledge about the revelation is important in deepening one's religious knowledge. We have no option but to take some steps to know revelation further on the basis of the explanations of the prophets (*'a*).

Revelation signifies the opening of a window to the unseen world and new horizons of the heaven of meaning to the prophets (*'a*). Revelation came from God and the Apostle (*ṣ*) was not expecting it:

﴿ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ يُلْقَى إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا
لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

> *"You did not expect that the Book would be delivered to you; but it was a mercy from your Lord."*[2]

This salient feature shows the superiority of *waḥī* to genius [*nubūgh*] as well as mystical intuition [*kashf*] or witnessing [*shuhūd*]. *Nubūgh* means extraordinary intelligence which makes some individuals understand certain "truths" without undergoing the normal pertinent learning processes. However, these types of "truths" are those that could be grasped by the intellect, not truths that are grasped as a result of the opening of new windows. Genius is like one who has extraordinary senses and can easily sense or feel what others could sense or feel with difficulty. A prophet, on the other hand, is one who has normal senses like all people, in which geniuses are also included; however, in addition he has another sense endowed by God which the others including the geniuses do not have.

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[1] 1- *Sūrah Nisā'* 4:163.

[2] 2- *Sūrah Qaṣaṣ* 28:86.

Contrary to *waḥī*, some may acquire mystical intuition [*kashf*] or witnessing [*shuhūd*] as a result of contentment that stems from man himself. If man were to focus his attention on his soul and after some time control his mutinous soul, he would perceive some truths within the depths of his self which others cannot perceive. He does not acquire these truths from others. Instead, control of the self effaces the indignation in his heart and uncovers the hidden truths within it. In regard to *waḥī*, however, the prophet only serves as the receiver of the message. He is an addressee of one who talks to with him. It is said that Jibra'īl (Archangel Gabriel) (*'a*) was teaching the Prophet (ṣ):

﴿ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى * عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ﴾

> *"It is just a revelation that is revealed [to him], taught him by One of great powers."*[1]

The prophets (*'a*) knew very well that somebody else was teaching them what to say, and on many occasions they could see their teacher, who was an angel of God (Jibra'īl) (*'a*). However, with *kashf* and *shuhūd*, this is not the case.

It is this pure perception which protects *waḥī* from any sort of mixture with human words. Contrary to the notion which nowadays is unfortunately advanced by some Christian sects that revelation is inferred from the religious experience of others such that the Bible (the New Testament in particular) is the interpretation or expression of the things which 'Īsā (Jesus) (*'a*) had acquired in his state of

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[1] *Sūrah Najm* 53:4-5.

kashf or *shuhūd*, revelation is free from any sort of interpolation or addition by the Prophet (ṣ) in conveying it. Perhaps the reason why in more than 300 places in the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is addressed with the command, "Say" [*qul*] is to stress the fact that his role in conveying the revelation is only to repeat exactly the divine message and that there is not the least room for him to have changed it.

The Apostle (ṣ) was aware of this heavy burden of responsibility. As such, as soon as he received a revelation, he would immediately recite it lest he forgot a word of it—even though God gave him assurance in this regard:

﴿ فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴾

> *"So, exalted is Allah, the True Sovereign. Do not hasten with the Qur'an before its revelation is completed for you, and say, 'My Lord! Increase me in knowledge'."*[1]

For this reason, the prophets chosen by God were those who were not known to have been learned. Some of them did not even know how to read and write. So, it cannot be entertained in the mind that their sayings were a product of their mystical intuition expressed in the language and culture of the time.

﴿ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴾

> *"You did not use to recite any scripture before it, nor did you write it with your right hand, for then the impugners would have been skeptical."*[2]

The divine revelation has been conveyed to the people in the form that it had been revealed to the Apostle (ṣ), and in order to remove any doubt about His Messenger (ṣ), God thus says:

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[1] *Sūrah Ṭā Hā* 20:114.

[2] *Sūrah 'Ankabūt* 29:48.

﴿ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ * وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الأَقَاوِيلِ * لأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ *
ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ * فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ * وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

"[It is] gradually sent down from the Lord of all the worlds. Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta, and none of you could have held Us off from him. Indeed it is a reminder for the God-wary."[1]

This verse does not mean that there was the possibility for the Prophet (*ṣ*) to have distorted the revelation had he not received a threat of an extremely harsh punishment! Such an understanding shows a lack of knowledge of grammatical rules of the language. The verse emphasizes the importance of the protection of the revealed text from any kind of change or distortion. As an example, it is sometimes said: "Even if my father were to allow it, I would not do it." This style of statement emphasizes the distaste for an action, and does not suggest that the father would really ask one to perform the action. In the same manner, God says that the safety of revelation from any kind of distortion [*taḥrīf*] is so vital that even if His most beloved (the Apostle (*ṣ*)) were to try to distort it (which he wouldn't), He would punish him in the way mentioned in the verse, let alone if this act were to be committed by others we could be sure that the punishment would also certainly be carried out!

In sum, *waḥī* is a kind of unusual "intelligence" which is beyond the frame of conventional analysis. It is only possible by the will and permission of God. The fact that it is unusual is the reason it is difficult for some people to accept, and they rightfully ask for proofs of the truthfulness of the receivers of revelation and God grants their requests by showing miracles [*mu'jizah*] or signs [*āyah*].

Miracles

The prophets (*'a*) claimed to be recipients of the divine message through revelation [*waḥī*] and, as stated earlier, *waḥī* means transcending beyond the boundary of common human perceptions. In other words, revelation itself or the receipt of a message from God is a miracle [*mu'jizah*] and supernatural. Confirmation of this claim can be made through innate testimony, certainty from the depth of one's soul, or reasoning and inference. Asking for proof of the authenticity of the prophets' claims is something reasonable and wholesome that is usually requested by the people:

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[1] *Sūrah Ḥāqqah* 69:43-48.

﴿ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ﴾

"They say, 'Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?'"[1]

And whenever this inquiry stems from love of truth, God answers thus:

﴿ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾

"Then We sent Moses and Aaron, his brother, with Our signs and a manifest authority."[2]

Whenever the people would doubt the authenticity of the prophets' claims or the people's certainty [*iṭmīnān*] would diminish for some reason, God would send His signs [*āyāt*] to the prophets (*'a*) so as to extinguish the faith-consuming fire of doubt and make the torch of conviction brighter. In the parlance of the theologians [*mutakallimīn*], these signs which substantiate the prophets' claims to revelation are known as miracles [*mu'jizah*].

It is said that the miracle—though not mentioned in this way in the Qur'an and the Bible—is one of the *essentials [ḍurūriyyāt] of religion*. Faith in its occurrence—in the sense of faith in the unseen power of the prophets (*'a*)—is a condition for deliverance. The Bible also cites examples of the occurrence of miracles:

> "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the

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[1] *Sūrah Ḥāqqah* 69:133.

[2] *Sūrah Mu'minūn* 23:45.

> Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left."[1]

Miracles are also mentioned in many verses of the Glorious Qur'an:

﴿ قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ * فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا
هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُبِينٌ * وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴾

> *"He said, 'If you have brought a sign, produce it, should you be truthful.' Whereat he threw down his staff, and behold, it became a manifest python. Then he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to the onlookers."*[2]

Regarding the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*), it also says:

﴿ اقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ * وَإِنْ يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُسْتَمِرٌّ ﴾

> *"The Hour has drawn near and the moon is split. If they see a sign, they turn away, and say, 'An incessant magic!'"*[3]

These verses refer to the miracle of moon-splitting done by the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*). Now, as there is no doubt regarding the occurrence of miracles in terms of faith, we shall turn our attention to miracles from the intellectual perspective.

From the intellectual perspective one may ask: Are miracles occurrences without causes? It can be said that, when Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (*'a*) was thrown into a burning fire, it not only suddenly became safe for him without any apparent cause, but it even became a source a comfort. However, such an interpretation of this miracle is not only against the axiomatic principle of reasoning, which associates a cause to every occurrence, but also inconsistent with the logic of the Qur'an which endorses the law of causation. The acceptance of the occurrence of miracles without any cause is tantamount to the acceptance that things happen by mere chance, which can have dire

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1- Exodus 14:21-22. In this volume, the translation of biblical passages is adapted from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible (Colorado: International Bible Society, 1984). [Trans.]

2- *Sūrah A'rāf* 7:106-108.

3- *Sūrah Qamar* 54:1-2.

consequences. For example, if a miracle is supposed to happen without any cause, it is then possible that the entire world of possibilities [*'ālam-e mumkināt*] could have been created without any cause and out of pure chance, which in turn could mean that the world is also not in need of any creator!?[1]

That, like all phenomena in this world, miracles have causes or sets of causes cannot be doubted. Therefore, it cannot be accepted that any event, including miracles, happens without any cause. However, different schools and persuasions have offered various answers to the question regarding the causes of miracles.

According to the Ash'arites [*Ashā'irah*] the motive behind the occurrence of miracles is the will of God and the fact that His will is above everything. Based on this belief, the fact that fire is usually warm or a source of heat is only a precedent [*sunnah*] of Allah which He can change whenever He wishes. Conventionally, fire is hot but this hotness is not its essence for it is changeable. We have no power to change the precedents [*sunan*] of Allah, but God who has set these precedents in the first place can change them and say to the fire:

﴿ قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴾

"We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!'"[2]

گر تو خواهی آتش آب خوش شود
ور نخواهی آب هم آتش شود

If You wish [to favor someone], fire can become pleasant water,
And if You do not, even water can become fire!

For the Ash'arites, every event is caused by the will of God. Whenever the fire is hot, the cause is God's will and if it is not hot, it is again because of His will. The only difference is that the first case is repeated many times and assumes the form of a "natural law" while the second case happens rarely.

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[1] See Muḥsin Jawādī, *Darāmadī bar Khudāshināsī Falsafī [An Introduction to Philosophical Theology]* (n.p: n.d.).
[2] *Sūrah Anbīyā'* 21:69.

Philosophers have another view. According to them, the world is not as simple as what the Ash'arites believe. The natural world is essentially governed by the law of causation. The hotness of the fire is a necessity. Of course, this is not in conflict with the absoluteness of divine power, for the will of God is done through an *essential system manifested by the law of causation*. As such, as advocated by prominent figures in the Shī'ah world, *mu'jizah* requires explanation and elaboration because it seems to go against the essential system of nature.

Under the assumption that the essential system of the world is accepted, there are two ways of explaining and elaborating the mechanism of *mu'jizah*:

1. *Mu'jizah* seems to outwardly violate the laws of nature, but this is not actually so. In this view, the prophets (*'a*) have knowledge of processes of substitution and replacement which others do not have. They are aware of factors existing in nature which can turn a piece of wood, for instance, into a living object like a snake. By using these factors, they can perform extraordinary acts. Since we do not know the natural process of turning a stick into a snake, we imagine that it is something unnatural. It is said that the prophets (*'a*) knew the secrets of nature through which they were able to perform wonderful acts.

This interpretation, in which there is no room for the intervention of a hidden power, is unacceptable due to the following questions: From where have the prophets (*'a*) acquired this wonderful knowledge? Is such knowledge acquired through the usual way of learning from others and through research and study? If so, why aren't there scientists in every period who are forerunners in this field? There is no doubt that the prophets' (*'a*) knowledge of the secrets of nature cannot assume a usual and conventional form. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that they have acquired the secrets of nature through extraordinary and supernatural means. However, if it is possible to become knowledgeable through an unnatural or supernatural way, why then whould it be impossible to turn a stick into a snake through an unnatural way? If a prophet can know the secrets of nature by relying on the knowledge of the unseen, there is no reason, through the same means, they cannot acquire extraordinary powers by which they can control the natural course of affairs.

2. According to the second view, with the help of the unseen, a prophet acquires extraordinary power through which he can control the natural course of affairs in the world. It is said, however, that control over the natural course of affairs takes place within the framework of special rules and this does not equate with going against natural causes. For further clarification, one may take into account a paralyzed person. This physically handicapped person is incapable of movement according to medical principles, but the same person sometimes can surprisingly be able to move in a certain spiritual state.[1] In this case, a spiritual power has exerted influence on the patient's body and changed its natural course. What is called "psychotherapy" does not mean falsification of biological principles. It rather means utilization of a powerful spiritual force that can have natural effects. Regarding *mu'jizah*, it can also be said that by using hidden powers, the prophets exert control over the natural course of affairs in such a manner that the immutable relationship between cause and effect is preserved. It is only because of the interference of hidden powers that there is a change in the natural course.

There is another issue here and that is, fakirs sometimes perform extraordinary acts, but their dissimilarity with the prophets lies in the power which *causes* such acts. The power of the prophets (*'a*) pertains to the decree of God while the fakirs perform such acts by enhancing their spiritual power and exerting influence on the natural course of affairs. This difference becomes clear when we realize that, firstly, the human power possessed by fakirs, no matter how strong it is, can also be acquired by others and secondly, it is always inferior to the unseen power. The power of the prophets (*'a*), on the other hand, is not human-based but rather God-given and extraordinary. It is therefore always dominant and can never be imparted to others.

While acknowledging the role of natural factors in the system of creation and the essential relationship between cause and effect, some

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[1] Take for example the medical treatment of Amīr Sāmānī by Ibn Sīnā. See Muṭahharī, *Nubuwwat*, p. 160.

Muslim scholars give justification to *mu'jizah* and the intervention of unnatural forces in the natural course of affairs without invalidating their natural effects. In other words, *mu'jizah* does not take place by undermining natural laws but rather by making use of a natural law and the application of an unnatural force.

Miracles as proof of the truthfulness of the prophets ('a)

In an attempt to differentiate *mu'jizah* from *kirāmah*, which is also a performance of extraordinary acts, books on *'ilm al-kalām* associate *mu'jizah* with the claim of prophethood and the receipt of revelation, and the absence of these elements in the case of *kirāmah*. In contrast to mortification (practiced by fakirs), *kirāmah* relates to seeking help from the Unseen without the purpose of proving any claim to prophethood. The very association of *mu'jizah* with the claim to prophethood is the basis of proof of the authenticity of the claim.

Apart from proving the possibility of revelation, based on the famous philosophical rule that similar things have identical rulings,[1] *mu'jizah* shows that just as power can be acquired from the Unseen and a stick be turned into a snake, the word of God can also be received from the Unseen and knowledge be acquired and taught to others.

As mentioned earlier, *waḥī* itself is a *mu'jizah* and an extraordinary occurrence. If miracles exist, there is also the possibility of *waḥī*. However, the role of *mu'jizah* lies more in proving the occurrence of *waḥī* and not its possibility, and *mu'jizah*'s role in proving the authenticity of the prophets' claim lies in the receipt of revelation. We shall explain by citing an example:

If an official attributes something to a ruler in the ruler's presence and addresses the people present, saying that the ruler has said such-and-such, and then in order to prove the authenticity of his claim, says that the sign of the truthfulness of his claim is, contrary to the customary way, that the ruler will clap his hands three times and then, after hearing this, the ruler claps three times, will the people still doubt the truthfulness of the official's claim? The same is the case with *mu'jizah* in proving the authenticity of the prophets' claim. In the presence of God, prophets address the people, saying that God has said certain things and the proof of our truthfulness is that God gives us extraordinary power for us to do wonderful acts in nature. When the prophets perform those wonderful acts, is there any doubt that they are telling the truth? As such, *mu'jizah* plays an important role in showing the truthfulness of the prophets (*'a*) revelation.

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[1] For information about this ruling and its application, see Ghulām-Muḥsin Ibrāhīmī Daynānī, *Qawā'id-e Kulli-ye Falsafī dar Falsafī-ye Islāmī [General Philosophical Rules in Islamic Philosophy]*, vol. 1, p. 208.

Has the period of miracles ended and are miracles no longer performed? Should we look for miraculous accounts in the Bible or in another place? The reply to such inquiry is that there is actually a miracle currently at our disposal. If we open our hearts and look at it through the eye of the intellect, we will realize that there is a great extant miracle and we will come to believe in the presenter of this miracle, the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*), and if we already have faith in him, that faith will be strengthened.

The Qur'an as the eternal miracle

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam and the foundation of Islamic teachings. Its letters, words, phrases, and sounds are all sacred and respected deeply by Muslims. Contrary to the case of the Bible, historically the Qur'an is totally within our sight and its history is as clear as limpid water. We even know which verse has been revealed on which occasion. In this regard, Muslims have written books which are called *asbāb an-nuzūl* [occasions of revelation].

The Muslims' belief in the Qur'an is basically different from what is usually said about the Christians' belief in the Bible. For Muslims, every word of the Qur'an is God's Word while for most Christians the Bible is an interpretation of the religious experience of Jesus (*'a*) which is necessarily affected by the people's culture and language, and its words are not exactly the words as revealed from God. According to His Will, God chose the Arabic language for the guidance of mankind during the last period of prophethood:

﴿ الر تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ * إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

> *"Alif, Lām, Rā. These are the signs of the Manifest Book. Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason."*[1]

The source of all Islamic sciences—ranging from scholastic theology [*kalām*] and philosophy [*falsafah*] through jurisprudence [*fiqh*], law [*ḥuqūq*] and ethics [*akhlāq*]—is the Qur'anic verses. The Qur'an is available to us in the same form it was revealed to the first Muslims, and it has remained safe from any sort of distortion [*taḥrīf*]. This is based on the promise made by God to protect it:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾

> *"Indeed We have sent down the Reminder and indeed We will preserve it."*[2]

In order to clarify the miracle of the Qur'an, three points must be settled: (1) its extraordinariness, (2) its proof of the Prophet's (ṣ) claim, and (3) the failure of people in discrediting it. The extraordinariness of the Qur'an can be shown in a variety of ways: it is a miracle of means, a miracle of expression and a miracle of meaning.

1. *A miracle of means*: There is no doubt that the receiver of the Qur'an was a common man. His name was never heard among the scholars and men of letters of his time. He was Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh (ṣ), grandson of 'Abd Manāf, the chief of Quraysh, who was born in Mecca. For forty years he was with the people, he had never recited anything similar to what he recited after the age of forty when he was appointed as a prophet. His moral conduct and trustworthiness were known to everyone but he had no prior talent in composing words of wisdom, and he knew neither how to read nor how to write. The Qur'an describes him as "uninstructed" [*ummī*]:

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[1] *Sūrah Yūsuf* 12:1-2.

[2] *Sūrah Ḥijr* 15:9.

﴿ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴾

> *"So have faith in Allah and His Apostle, the uninstructed prophet, who has faith in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided."*[1]

Not only was the Prophet (*ṣ*) himself *ummī* but also in Mecca, where he came from, knowledge and learning were not prevalent. Arts were only expressed to glorify man's bestial inclinations. Poets recited either lovely poems to incite sensual desires or epic songs to incite anger and vengeance. Given such societal conditions, there is no doubt that only through uncommon means was it possible for the prophet to recite such extraordinary words. If the Qur'anic verses were a product of his own thinking and upbringing, at least some years earlier, words similar to the Qur'an should have been heard from him.

Not only was the Prophet's (*ṣ*) receipt of the Qur'an extraordinary but in essence the revelation of the Qur'an in such a state of affairs that existed in the Ḥijāz was also unusual and beyond expectation. The striking difference between the meaning and elegance of the expression of the Qur'an with the literary and scholarly works of those days was so evident that at one glance it could be discerned by every observer. The opponents of the Apostle (*ṣ*) were also aware of this fact, and thus, they were not saying, "These words are senseless or beyond methodical eloquence and fluency," or "They are just similar to other Arabic literary works." They were rather saying: "These words must not have come from Muḥammad; he must have learned them from someone else," or "He is practicing magic," or "He is possessed by the *jinn* [*majnūn*]."[2] In the midst of these calumnies and allegations, an elegant acknowledgment and profound confession of the extraordinariness of the Qur'an is self-evident. In a beautiful expression in the Qur'an, we are told that if we doubt the divine origin of the Qur'an, we should look for another person like Muḥammad (*ṣ*) who could compose similar words:

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[1] *Sūrah A'rāf* 7:158.

[2] *Majnūn* means that a person has connection with the *jinn*. The Arabs believed that the *jinn* could teach man and thus, they regarded the Qur'an as taught by the *jinn*!

﴿ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴾

> *"And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a sūrah like it, and invoke your helpers besides Allah, should you be truthful."*[1]

However, you cannot do so. In fact, even if all humans join together and help one another in whatever way possible, still they cannot do so:

﴿ قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴾

> *"Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another.'"*[2]

2. *A miracle of expression*: The Qur'an is the peak of eloquence and fluency. That is, as acknowledged by great scholars of language, it conveys intended meanings through elegant and lucid expressions. The Arabs who used to hear Qur'anic verses during that time were acquainted with literary styles and methods of expression. The revelation of the Qur'an with such eloquence and fluency to a people who used to regard themselves as the masters of expression was a great challenge and it can be guessed what a revolution it brought in the literary circles of the day. They did everything they could, but they failed to keep secret their true feelings about the beauty of the Qur'an, and on many occasions they would recite verses of the Qur'an in private.

The orators and poets of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance [*jāhiliyyah*] who had truly surpassed the men of letters of the previous periods in eloquence and fluency became so helpless in facing the astounding elegance of the Qur'an that they had no option but to accuse the Prophet (*ṣ*) of practicing magic and call him a powerful sorcerer who dazzles the eyes and controls the hearts of people.

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[1] - *Sūrah Baqarah* 2:23.

[2] - *Sūrah Isrā'* (or *Banī Isrā'īl*) 17:88.

The Qur'an has special styles of expression which are neither common poetry nor prose. Its fluency and eloquence lie in the elegance of expressions and the use of parables. The elegance of poetry lies in its imaginativeness. Usually, the farther it is from reality, the sweeter it becomes to human taste. However, the Qur'an is devoid of the kind of whimsical and fallacious analogies prevalent in poetry. In spite of this, its elegance is captivating. How is it possible to speak elegantly, and at the same time, avoid any naïve simile and scenario-making? Who could create such elegance in speech without taking advantage of the strength of human imagination?

Even though we do not fathom the profundity of the eloquence and fluency of the Qur'an, we can sense its beauty and divinity. When we compare the sayings of Imām 'Alī (*'a*), who was the master of oration and whose words are the peak of eloquence [*nahj al-balāghah*][1], with a Qur'anic verse the beauty of the former compared to the latter is as the bezel to the gemstone.

The beauty of the Qur'an is not confined to the eloquence and fluency of its expression. In fact, the soothing melody of its sounds is also a manifestation of its miracle. The Qur'an has been essentially revealed in oral form. That is, it was made known in the form of sounds which later came out in written form. For this reason, it has an astounding harmony and its recitation is soothing to the ears and attractive to the hearts.

Beauty always pertains to the feelings, but there are diverse feelings. Beautiful love poetry incites the carnal feelings of man while an epic song stirs his sense of bravery. However, the Qur'an awakens the spiritual feelings in humanity. Its magnificence brings a person to the sublime world of spirituality, wipes the dust off his God-seeking nature [*fiṭrah*], and shows the sublime countenance of the divine spirit embedded in every individual.

3. *A miracle of meaning*: The Qur'an is a book of guidance and a luminous torch to the way of salvation. It teaches man everything he needs to know to attain felicity both in this world and the hereafter. That which is usually expected from such book is a set of programs

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1- *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ), Sermon 233, p. 354.

and instructions, and not the discovery of the realities of existence. However, the technique of the Qur'an is to introduce essential instructions and injunctions through the unveiling of fundamental realities of the universe.

According to the Qur'an, the felicity of man cannot be attained without passing through the realities of life. For this reason, knowing God is the most essential reality of life, faith in the angels is an important reality in the field of action, and cognition of many other fundamental realities are all elements of man's felicity. Based on the approaches of the Qur'an, it is only through knowledge and faith in the realities of existence that the felicity of man can be ensured. The topics of the Qur'an in introducing God, who is the Origin and Source of creation, are nature (which is the life domain of humanity), the hereafter (which is the final destination of life) and human beings themselves (who are the wayfarers in the path of salvation).

Regarding God, the human intellect cannot describe Him beyond a specified point: He is the One and Only God, who knows every particle in the universe; the overall Sovereign. The important point here is that it is the Qur'an that introduces God as far as it is comprehendible for man.

While having no similitude whatsoever to any of His creatures, the God of the Qur'an[1] is so close to man that He can hear his whisper:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ ﴾

> *"Certainly We have created man and We know to what his soul tempts him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein."*[2]

Contrary to the God of philosophers,[3] the God of the Qur'an gives attention to the world of humans. As such, man can seek His assistance and rely on Him. The Qur'an has many descriptions of the agents of Divine Action, i.e. the angels, which the human intellect cannot conceive of.

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[1] That is, God as described in the Qur'an. [Trans.]

[2] *Sūrah Qāf* 50:16.

[3] That is, God as usually described in philosophy by philosophers. [Trans.]

If man has taken some steps in the valley of knowing God through his deductive reasoning, he has nothing to say in the realm of unraveling the realities of his destination, such as the purgatorial world [*'ālam al-barzakh*] and the Resurrection. This is while a considerable portion of the Qur'an, i.e. almost one-third, describes such fundamental realities in an elegant and pleasant, yet alarming, manner. How could these concepts and meanings, which become clearer to man with his intellectual growth, be a product of his mind?

Regarding the natural world in which we presently live, there are interesting passages in the Qur'an many of which are in conformity with the recent findings in natural sciences.

Moreover, a large part of the Qur'an deals with moral and juristic programs which have no parallel. Qur'anic ethics is not alien to the real life of humanity. In fact, it has been organized with the nature and limitations of human beings in mind. God knows that morality is observed only when it is inculcated in one's mind that he shall enjoy everlasting benefit from behaving morally. People render sacrifice and give preference to others to enjoy worldly benefits only when they know that by doing so, they shall obtain everlasting favor like admission to paradise or winning the pleasure of God. This important point is remarkably stressed in the moral training and edification of the Qur'an. Whenever the Qur'an invites a person to help others, it says:

﴿ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ
وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴾

"Who is it that will lend Allah a good loan that He may multiply it for him several fold? And Allah tightens and expands [the means of life], and to Him you shall be brought back."[1]

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[1] 1- *Sūrah Baqarah* 2:245.

God considers giving a loan to others the same as giving a loan to oneself because the benefits will always return to the giver. This point has been stated in the Qur'an many times. Is there any stronger motivation for doing good deeds? For anyone who reads the verses of the Qur'an and understands their meaning, his conscience will be awakened and he will be encouraged to do good deeds.

In the field of law and jurisprudence, the case is the same. The evidence of the greatness and merit of Qur'anic-based jurisprudence is the testimony of thousands of scholars for centuries in its solution to various legal problems.

In addition, notwithstanding the challenges to the Qur'an and strong motives of the enemies of Islam to discredit it, throughout history no one has been able to produce a verse even similar to the verses of the Qur'an. Thus, the miraculous elements of the Qur'an are all-encompassing and there is no doubt that it is a miracle. Because the Qur'an is an eternal miracle that captivates the hearts of all people, then Islam must also be a religion for all times because the Qur'an is the holy book of Islam.

Finality of prophethood

To believe that the prophethood, which began with Ādam (*'a*), ends with the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) is one of the essentials of the religion of Islam. Accordingly, every Muslim must believe in this point. Doubt about it is tantamount to the denial of Islam. The Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) has mentioned this point many times. It is recorded that during the Tabūk Expedition, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) said to Imam 'Alī (*'a*):

أما ترضىٰ أن تكون منّي بمنزلة هارون من موسىٰ إلاّ أنّه لانبيّ بعدي؟

> "Are you not satisfied that you are to me as Hārūn (Aaron) is to Mūsā (Moses) except that there will be no prophet after me?"[1]

This and similar narrations [*riwāyāt*] have been recorded in Sunnī and Shī'ah sources without a broken chain of narrators [*tawātur*][1] and thus there is no doubt about its authenticity [*ṣiḥah*]. More important than these narrations are the implicit, and at times explicit, verses of the Qur'an regarding this:

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[1] *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, vol. 2, p. 520; Ibn Ḥajar (al-'Asqalānī), *Aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah* (Egypt, 2nd Edition), Book 9, Chapter 2, p. 121. [Trans.]

﴿ مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴾

> *"Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah has knowledge of all things."*[2]

The Qur'an, which is the book of Islam, has been sent down for all people not just those who were present at the time of its revelation. This implies that everyone must put his hopes in the Qur'an for salvation. More explicit than this, however, are verses which indicate that Islam is the religion of God in its complete and final form and thus there is no need for the coming of another prophet:

﴿ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلَامَ
دِينًا ﴾

> *"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion."*[3]

Khātam literally means seal with which a letter or message is usually ended. The Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*), as the *khātam*, signifies that the series of prophets ends with him. Therefore, there is no doubt that one of the pillars of the religion of Islam is the finality of prophethood [*khātamiyyah*] in which Muslims must believe.

1- By *tawātur* is meant the multiplicity of the sources of a certain report that leads to certitude in the listener that the report is indeed true. A *mutawātir ḥadīth* is one which has been reported by so many different chains of transmission and such a number of narrators in every generation that normally one could not fabricate such a tradition without the fact of its fabrication becoming known. [Trans.]

2- *Sūrah Aḥzāb* 33:40.

3- *Sūrah Mā'idah* 5:3.

However, why has the prophethood ended? Will the reasons behind the sending of prophets not be repeated again?

In reply to these questions, Muslims scholars have different views, one of which is as follows:[1]

In theoretically analyzing the reason behind the finality of prophethood in Islam, firstly the intellectual and spiritual condition of the previous communities of people must be compared with that of the later communities after the apostleship of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). Reflecting on the collective life of humankind leads us to the point that just as the there are different stages—for example, sometimes humans are in the stage of childhood and the world of fantasy and at times in the stage of adulthood and intellectual maturity—humankind as a whole has also passed through different stages. The period of immaturity had passed and around the advent of Islam humans had entered a period of adulthood and maturity. The difference between the two periods is manifested in various forms. During the initial stages, humans were like children who were in need of constant care and supervision. Prophets (*'a*) used to come in succession so as to constantly lead the people to the way of salvation, and assist them in every circumstance so that they would be able to identify their duties and act upon them. However, the people of today—who are the addressees of Islam–have reached such a stage of understanding and maturity that given their spiritual and material assets they can identify their duties more readily and follow the path of salvation.

The teachings of Islam, which according to the Ahl al-Sunnah are derived from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (ṣ), and according to the Shī'ah are derived from the sayings of the infallible Imāms (*'a*) as well, are at the disposal of all people so that they can easily tread their chosen path.

The concept of *ijtihād,* which means deduction of laws from the sources of Islam, has immense importance here for it is by means of *ijtihād* that Islam responds to the new and unprecedented needs of mankind. It must be noted that the *mujtahid*[1] does not bring in any new decree that contradicts the finality of Islam. What he does is whenever he encounters a new issue whose ruling is not explicitly stated in the religious texts, he deduces its ruling by using the sources of Islam—including the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*—based on an organized or codified system (principles of jurisprudence [*uṣūl al-fiqh*]) and relays the ruling, suitably deduced, to others.

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[1] The following view is extracted from the works of Āyatullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Khatm-e Nubuwwat [Finality of Prophethood]* in his compendium of works, vol. 3, p. 151.

Therefore, it can be said that the development and maturity of humanity at the present period was the reason God presented His religion in its final and complete form. At his present level of development, whenever humankind encounters a new issue, the level of maturity is available to deduce the correct way and avoid misguidance. The maturity and keenness of the people at the present age make them different from their predecessors who did not recognize the worth and value of their sacred scriptures and distorted them. One of the reasons behind the continuity of prophethood before was the distortions mankind made to the previous holy books, turning them from books of guidance into common story books and even using them as a source of misguidance for others. Today, however, after many centuries mankind has neither added nor omitted a word or even a letter from the Qur'an and, as God has promised, it has remained safe from any distortion whatsoever.

Moreover, the power of reasoning and intellectual capacity of humanity at the period of the apostleship of the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) was such that God provided everything humans needed about the fundamental realities of existence. That is, whatever is necessary for the guidance and salvation of humankind to the end of time has been mentioned in the Qur'an.

Understanding and acquisition of knowledge are closely related to one's aptitude and readiness. God, who knows that humankind at the present time is at the peak of readiness to grasp such truths, taught it whatever is necessary and feasible. Of course, it is clear that the readiness of humanity to acquire knowledge and information about the world of nature and the secrets of creation that make them capable of dominating nature is always on the rise, but this is beside the point.

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[1] - *Mujtahid*: one who exercises or practices *ijtihād*. [Trans.]

The Qur'an is meant to state the facts essential for the *salvation* of all people and so it has not abandoned anything in this regard. As such, the advancement in natural sciences, mathematics and even philosophy do not change the teachings of Islam, and scientific and technological progress do not bring about the need for a new prophet, because prophetic knowledge is related to the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality.

In addition, the moral values of religion are also eternal and must be given attention and acted upon in all aspects of life. If a civilization demands that lying must be the basis of action, one should not submit to it on the pretext that the exigency of time demands it. One must rather doubt the foundation of such a civilization and *always* rely upon the firm foundation of religious morality. However, some things that may undermine religion in modern times are changes in legal relations. Modern life has raised new issues but, as we have said, the solution to these kinds of problems is the method of *ijtihād*.

Given this concise explanation, it is clear that the present human is not in need of a new prophet and of course God was aware of this fact before and more than any person. Now, fourteen centuries have passed since the advent of Islam, and no new religion or new prophet has come. This is in spite of the fact that usually the time interval between two prophets had been very short and sometimes there had even been numerous prophets present at the same time. This itself is a living testimony that the door of revelation is closed and the criterion for salvation embedded in the Islamic sources, i.e. the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Hence, the complete proof or argument [*ḥujjah*] of God has been disclosed to all who open their ears, eyes, and hearts to the truth.

Chapter Two

IMAMATE AND LEADERSHIP

Section One: **Period of the Presence of the Imāms (‘a)**
Section Two: **Period of Occultation**

Section One

Period of the Presence of the Imāms (‘a)

General Objectives

After studying this discourse, students are expected:

1. To know the origin of the Sunnī and Shī‘ah schools of thought and their main differences on the issue of Imamate;

2. To be acquainted with the manner of selecting the Imāms and their continuity;

3. To understand the pivotal role of the Imāms in protecting the foundation of religion, guiding the Muslims and propagating religious teachings; and

4. To be aware of the Shī‘ah viewpoint on the savior and the constructive effect of waiting during the period of occultation.

Introduction

Clarification of the principle of Imamate and the circumstances surrounding its inclusion in the intellectual body of a group of Muslims (Shī‘ah) as one of their ideological principles lies in paying attention to the following points:

1. Based on the monotheistic worldview, the One and Only God is the Creator of the universe and the Master and Cherisher of the entire creation including humanity. This is called “monotheism in Lordship” [*tawḥīd fī’r-rubūbiyyah*]. Accordingly, for a religious and monotheist person, God has the right to rule over human beings and assign duties to them such that every person has duties to God and there is no escape but to discharge them.

Therefore, God has the legislative right [*ḥaqq-e tashrī‘ī*] and the people, in turn, are duty-bound to submit and surrender to Him. On the one hand, the principle of monotheism gives this right solely to God and it is wrong for people to associate this right to any other than Him. If we believe someone else to have such a right, we have actually drifted away from “monotheism in sovereignty” [*tawḥīd fī’l-*

ḥākimiyyah], and once we obey the command of other than God, we fall into the abyss of "polytheism in obedience" [*shirk fī't-ṭā'ah*]. On the other hand, the requisite of the acceptance of monotheism is the all-encompassing legislative sovereignty of God in the sense that human beings cannot accept the sovereignty of God only in some decrees or in a specific domain; rather, one should abide by every commandment of God, the Sublime, in every sphere.

2. God has exercised His legislative sovereignty by sending prophets and issuing orders and decrees through them. However, if the religion is meant to put Divine Sovereignty into action, as it is, and its ultimate goal is the implementation of religious commandments, such a goal is in need of prerequisites and special conditions apart from conveyance of the message.

Historically, the tasks done by the prophets of God have been more than the conveyance and elucidation of revelation. Their incessant struggles and untiring efforts were not only confined to communication of a message. In fact, the prophets (*'a*) strived hard for the Divine Sovereignty in different facets of life. The loftiest of the goals and objectives of the prophets (*'a*) was the emancipation of man from the bondage of the *ṭāghūt*[1] and drawing him to the servitude and worship of God.

3. For the monotheistic logic to rule over the life of man, first of all, we are in need of revelation and the conveyance of the message which is the primary function and duty of the prophets of Allah (prophethood). We are also in need of the elucidation, exposition and teaching of the conveyed message so as to avoid difference of interpretations (religious authority). In addition, there is a need for an executive and administrative institution to actually implement the religious commandments (leadership).

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[1] The term *ṭāghūt* applies to any idol, object, or individual that prevents men from doing what is good, and leads them astray. The term has been used eight times in the Qur'an. Prior to Islam, *ṭāghūt* had been the name of one of the idols of the Quraysh tribe. This name is used also to mean Satan. Moreover, the term is used to indicate one who rebels against lofty values, or who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself whether explicitly or implicitly. [Trans.]

4. When the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was alive, apart from conveying the revelation, which is a prophetic function, he practically assumed two other responsibilities. In case of any difference of opinions on a religious matter, his view and opinion served as the final word. He, who recited the Qur’an to the people, considered it also his duty to explain it to them and state the rulings and cases not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. This task of the Apostle (ṣ) was actually complimentary to his role of receiving the revelation. As such, the *Sunnah* was of special importance and played the role of explainer and elucidator of the Qur’an. This is the same function of “religious authority” [*marja‘iyyat-e dīnī*] which was also performed by the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

The station of *wilāyah*[1] and leadership was among the designations of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). Any decision he took for the *ummah*[2] was binding. From the very beginning of his prophetic call, he took steps for the Islamic *ummah* to establish a government. His steps from the beginning to the end bore witness of the existence of a systematic program for the establishment of a religious government. The efforts made in Mecca were also a historical prelude for the establishment of a formal government in Medina. Purging of the internal enemies and the hypocrites in Medina and waging war against the infidels and foreign powers demonstrated the Muslims’ motivation to establish a global government under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

No Muslim at that time ever thought that the Prophet’s (ṣ) duty was only to convey the message. His all-encompassing authority was such that there was no separation between religion and politics.

In addition to the conveyance of revelation, the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) had two other responsibilities—intellectual authority and practical leadership of the Islamic *ummah*—exactly the same responsibilities shouldered by the Imāms (*‘a*) after the Prophet (ṣ). Apart from being the recipient of revelation, the Prophet (ṣ) was also the Imām and *proof of Allah* [*ḥujjat Allāh*] for the people. His being the proof of Allah entailed responsibilities on the part of the people. Firstly, whatever the Prophet (ṣ) declared as lawful or unlawful—even though not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an—became a duty upon the people. Secondly, whatever policy he as the leader adopted, was thereafter an inviolable administrative measure or decree. Whatever dispute, whether theoretical or practical, that was settled in the presence of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) subsequently the people had to "hold fast" [*i'tiṣām*] to it as "Allah's cord" [*ḥabl Allāh*].[1]

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[1] For further information about the idea of guardianship [*wilāyah*] and the guardian [*wālī*], see Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Wilāyah: The Station of the Master*, trans. Yaḥyā Cooper (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1982). [Trans.]

[2] *Ummah*: the entire Islamic community which knows no territorial, racial, national or ethnic distinction. [Trans.]

5. The Apostle (ṣ), therefore, had **two functions,** viz. **apostleship [*risālah*] and leadership [*imāmah*]**. With the declaration of the finality of prophethood by God, ***risālah*** culminated with the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and the people were not supposed to look for another prophet after him. Until the end of the world, all must adhere to one religion—Islam—and its heavenly book —the Qur'an—must be the basis of religion.

However, after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), this question was raised: With the departure of the Prophet (ṣ), what is the designation of Imamate or religious authority and leadership [*imāmah*] of the Islamic *ummah*?

Shī'ism

Some believed that with the passing away of the Prophet (ṣ), leadership [*imāmah*]—in the sense of perfect interpretation of the religion—also came to an end. They believed that after the Prophet (ṣ), God did not designate anyone to be the flawless interpreter of the religion. In this case, divine leadership [*imāmah*] ended and thereafter the implementers of divine sovereignty were general vicegerents, viz. the people. As such, *imāmah* was not a divine designation in the sense that God had not appointed someone for the post. Accordingly, the people had to assume the responsibility of religious authority and the function of interpreting the religion was delegated to them. The executive leadership of the people was determined by themselves. Consultation and election was the means to determine the successor and caliph [*khalīfah*] of the Messenger (*ṣ*) for the performance of the function of leadership. In the course of time, this notion became prevalent: “The Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) has entrusted to the people the affair of religious leadership.”

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[1] 1- See *Sūrah Āli 'Imrān* 3:103.

On the contrary, according to another group, just as prophethood is a divine designation, leadership [*imāmah*] is also a divine covenant. They believed that “Sovereignty or rule is the right of God and He guarantees the perpetuity of His religion by designating the flawless interpreter and infallible leader after the Prophet (*ṣ*).” Proponents of the second view who are called Shī‘ah are of the opinion that the institution of leadership [*imāmah*] has been determined and defined by God Himself through the Prophet (*ṣ*), and the people must abide by it. According to the Shī‘ah, twelve persons have been designated as the leaders of the *ummah*, interpreters of the religion and masters of the affairs, and the Qur’an also enjoins us to follow them.[1] According to this view, the sovereignty of God is observed through the Imāms who are the vicegerents of God. All their commands are binding and their interpretation of the religion is the correct interpretation.

The two schools of thought—Sunnī and Shī‘ah—are the two main trends in the Muslim world. The issue of Imamate is the main issue that has divided Muslims into two groups.[2]

These two schools of thought differ on some issues:

1. The Shī‘ah regard the sayings and actions of the *Ahl al-Bayt*[3] (*‘a*), in addition to those of the Prophet (*ṣ*), as the decisive proof and criterion of truth. According to this view, after the Apostle (*ṣ*) a sort of

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1- *Sūrah Nisā’* 4:59: *“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.”*

2- See Shahristānī, *Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 24.

3- *Ahl al-Bayt*: according to authentic *ḥadīth*s recorded in both Sunnī and Shī‘ah sources, the term *Ahl al-Bayt*, and interchangeably *Iṭrah* and *Āl*, is a blessed Qur’anic appellation that belongs exclusively to the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn (*‘a*). The members of this Family of five, with the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) at its head, were the ones present at the time the Qur’anic verses regarding their virtues were being revealed to the Prophet (*ṣ*). However, nine other Imāms from the descendants of Imām al-Ḥusayn (*‘a*) are also included in this chosen Family, the final one being Imām al-Mahdī (*‘a*). For further information, visit: http://www.al-islam.org/faq. [Trans.]

religious authority based on "inspired knowledge" [*al-'ilm al-ladunnī*] is entrusted to the Imāms (*'a*). Through means beyond our comprehension, the Imāms (*'a*) had acquired the Islamic sciences from the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*). Each of them then passed to his successor whatever he had inherited from the Prophet (*ṣ*).[1]

The Ahl as-Sunnah, however, assert that only the Prophet (*ṣ*) is infallible and only his sayings are devoid of any error, and none of his family members, companions and caliphs has such merit. As such, according to the Sunnīs the sayings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) are at most as authoritative as those of religious scholars.[2] Hundreds of mistakes of the companions and caliphs have been recorded in Sunnī books.[3]

2. According to the Shī'ah, religious authority and leadership [*imāmah*] is a divine trust which must be determined by God. As such, Imamate is not a customary position or designation that depends on public acceptance and allegiance. It is rather a program set up by God for the guidance of mankind which does not necessitate the acceptance and approval of the people. Linking the fate of religion to the will of the people is tantamount to the mixture of the will of God with that of the people, and this is incompatible with the necessity of Imamate and the infinite wisdom of God. The commandments of God constitute His religion and Imamate, which in God's design for the guidance of humanity is an integral part of religion and one of the divine obligations. The people are duty-bound to implement this program. That is, the *ummah* has no option but to accept it and this acceptance is a religious obligation and a prerequisite of faith. From this perspective, there is no difference between *nubuwwah* and *imāmah*. All those who accepted prophethood [*nubuwwah*] must also accept Imamate [*imāmah*].

It is true that without the acceptance of the people, no program or design can be implemented successfully. Therefore, the materialization of Imamate depends on the will and approval of the people. It must be noted, however, that materialization is not identical with the rightfulness of a thing. According to the Shī‘ah, some dimensions of the authority of the Imāms (*‘a*) were not put into practice, but this does not nullify in any way the legitimacy of Imamate. Similarly, the people’s non-acceptance or denial of true prophets never affected the truthfulness of their messages.

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[1] Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Imāmat va Rahbarī [Imamate and Leadership]*, p. 52.

[2] See Sunnī books on the principles of jurisprudence and Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Al-Murājā'at*, Correspondence 13.

[3] Muṭahharī, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 53.

According to Sunnī scholars, Imamate is an affair without any specified divine decree and religious authority can be assumed by common religious scholars. Leadership, therefore, is also an affair without any specified divine decree. They maintain that the caliph or Imām can be determined through general suffrage,[1] appointment or designation by the preceding caliph,[2] or by the use of force and violence.[3]

3. According to the Shī‘ah, Imamate is one of the fundamental ideological principles which every Muslim must believe in and in which there is no room for emulation [*taqlīd*]. Since designation of the Imām is one of the prerogatives of God, it is one of the roots of religion [*uṣūl ad-dīn*] and scholastic theology [*‘ilm al-kalām*] is its proper place for discussion.[4] The Ahl as-Sunnah, however, who regard Imamate as an affair of the people without any specified divine decree include it in the list of secondary duties in jurisprudence and discuss it in the science of jurisprudence [*fiqh*].[5]

4. In view of the aforementioned points, the Shī‘ah definition of Imamate is totally different from that of the caliphate or leadership by the Ahl as-Sunnah, where the issue of leadership and government is only an outward aspect of the functions of Imamate and is not comprehensive in all its aspects.[6]

5. Most of the Shī‘ah give a special position to the Imāms (*‘a*) in addition to their religious authority and political leadership. According to the Shī‘ah, just as the legislative will of God is manifested through

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1- Sa‘ad ad-Dīn Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, vol. 5, p. 233; Shahristānī, *Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 72.

2- Abū’l-Ḥasan Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām as-Salṭāniyyah*, p. 7.

3- Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, vol. 5, p. 233.

4- ‘Abd ar-Razzāq Lāhījī, *Gawhār-e Murād*, p. 467.

5- Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, vol. 5, p. 232.

6- See Muṭahharī, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 70.

the infallible Imāms (*'a*), who are in charge of religious guidance and sociopolitical leadership of the people, they also have guardianship or authority [*wilāyah*] in the cosmic world [*'ālam-e takwīnī*] and serve as the medium between God and the people. According to this perspective on Imamate, the Imāms (*'a*) have a third function, i.e. esoteric *imāmah*. In other words, like the Prophet (*ṣ*), the Imāms (*'a*) are mediums of divine grace and, by the will of God, they have exceptional power over the world and mankind. Based on the Shī'ah teachings, the earth will not remain without the existence of a proof of Allah [*ḥujjat Allāh*]. The miracles shown by the infallible Imāms (*'a*) are signs of this kind of *wilāyah*.[1]

The necessity of Imamate

No doubt, the compulsoriness [*wujūb*] of following the Imām is not the same as proof of the rational necessity of Imamate, but even if such necessity is not proven, the fact that we know that God has been kind to His servants and entrusted the Imāms to the people is sufficient. Therefore, to search for the rational reason and at times to challenge the necessity, cannot affect in anyway the compulsoriness of obedience to the Imāms (*'a*). If the true sovereignty belongs to Him, as it does, He can also set a specific program for its materialization.

At the same time, great religious figures have never neglected discussing the rational justification of Imamate and have written much in this regard. Of course, Imamate in its broad sense—general Imamate—can be rationally justified very well but the number of the Imāms or their names—specific Imamate—is beyond the confinement of rational proofs as it can only be proved textually [*naqlī*], i.e. by citing religious textual sources. The argument on the necessity of the existence of an infallible Imām is like the argument on the necessity of prophethood [*nubuwwah*] and revelation. This argument can be used in both functions of the Imām—religious authority and political leadership.

Regarding religious authority it can be argued that if religion is necessary and divine wisdom dictates, it must be clearly declared to the people and this declaration is not only confined to the Qur'an. In

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1- See *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, "Abwāb al-Ḥujjah"; Muṭahharī, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 56.

fact, a great portion of the laws needed by mankind cannot explicitly be inferred from the Qur’an. As dictated by divine wisdom, therefore, there must be infallible interpreters of the religion. This is the same principle which is sometimes called “grace” [*luṭf*] and this extent of grace is incumbent upon God.

This argument can also be confirmed historically and objectively. Practically, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) did not find the opportunity to completely explain the Islamic law [*sharī‘ah*] to all people. By briefly referring to Shī‘ah books on tradition [*ḥadīth*], it will become clear that many laws that can be deduced from the sayings and actions of the Infallibles (*‘a*) cannot basically be found in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣ*).[1] Notwithstanding all his efforts, the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) did not find the opportunity to relay all the laws needed by Muslims, for during the 23 years of his prophetic mission, he had to deal with colossal problems such as three years of confinement in the valley of Abū Ṭālib and ten years of struggle and war with the enemies and the conspiracies of hypocrites. Besides, after him, people even differed on some laws which he taught to the people including the manner of performing ablution [*wuḍū*].[2]

Concerning the necessity of the second function, i.e. political leadership, it can also be argued that after we acknowledge that sovereignty belongs to God and the people are in need of a leader, divine wisdom dictates that the Islamic society must not be devoid of righteous leaders. If obedience to individuals disapproved by God is supposed to be considered obedience to the *ṭāghūt*, life in society is impossible without the ruler’s exercise of authority and the people’s adherence to it. So, religious arrangement for this post must have been formulated.

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[1] By referring to the Shī‘ah books on tradition [*ḥadīth*], it will become clear that the magnitude of narrations [*riwāyāt*] is ten times greater than the Holy Qur’an and sayings of the Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*). For instance, *Wasā’il ash-Shī‘ah* compiled by the late Shaykh Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī consists of 30 volumes; *Mustadrak al-Wasā’il* by Muḥaddith Nūrī in 18 volumes; and *Biḥār al-Anwār* by ‘Allāmah Majlisī in 110 volumes contain narrations from the Infallibles (*‘a*).

[2] See Muṭahharī, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 93; Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Āmuzesh-e ‘Aqā’id*, p. 305.

The historical reality or state of affairs of the Islamic society at that time also confirms this point. Firstly, it cannot be accepted that during the particular time when the Apostle (ṣ) was pursuing his great mission and goal and the Islamic society was not yet well established, the *ummah* would be devoid of just leadership. Secondly, delegation of the issue of caliphate and leadership to consultation and general suffrage cannot be part of the Prophet's (ṣ) instructions, for general suffrage at that time was an unknown method in society. As a proof of this claim, the first and second caliphs also adopted appointment [*istikhlāf*], i.e. designation of the succeeding caliph (either by direct appointment or through a council). Thirdly, the peculiar conditions of Arabia at that time such as the prevalence of fanaticism and tribalism, the haughtiness of powerful foreign enemies, the conspiracy of the hypocrites, the possibility of schemes against the political authority of the Prophet (ṣ), and the emergence of false prophets dictated that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would give special attention to the issue of leadership and leave no stone unturned in clarifying the ambiguities and doubts surrounding it.

Therefore, according to the Shī'ah, by settling the issue of religious authority and political leadership after him the Holy Prophet (ṣ) had perfected the religion and guaranteed its implementation. What is mentioned as the last point of perfection in the religion was the scheme related to the existence of proof [*ḥujjah*] in society that could ensure the perfection of religion so that no loophole could be found in the religious authority. For this reason, from the Shī'ah viewpoint, Imamate is a complementary of apostleship. The Apostle (ṣ) also strongly links the Qur'an which is the symbol of apostleship to his pure progeny [*'itrah*] (*'a*) which embodies the *Sunnah*.

Imamate as a matter of appointment [manṣūṣ]

Infallibility [*'iṣmah*], which is an essential characteristic of the designated intellectual authority and perfect interpreter of the religion, requires that the individuals occupying the post of Imamate must be identified by God. A study of the life of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) clearly shows that he had strived throughout his life to introduce the Imāms (*'a*). During the third year of the prophetic mission [*bi'that*] when the Apostle (ṣ) was commanded by God to openly invite his relatives to Islam,[1] he referred to Imām ‘Alī (*‘a*) as his brother, the executor of his will [*waṣī*] and successor [*khalīfah*] before an assembly of his kith and kin, asking them to recognize ‘Alī (*‘a*) as the caliph of the Muslims.[2] Elsewhere, he introduced the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*‘a*) as one of the Two Weighty Things [*thaqalayn*] inseparable to the Qur'an.[3] It is clear that what must always be with the Qur'an is like the Qur'an in the compulsoriness of following it as an intellectual authority of the Muslims. Similarly, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) had also likened the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*‘a*) to the Ark of Noah (*‘a*). That is, those who will embark the Ark will be saved while those who will refuse to do so will be drowned.[4] In some instances, he introduced his *Ahl al-Bayt* (*‘a*) as the twelve caliphs after him and had not spared repeating and emphasizing this.[5]

The Tradition of Ghadīr [Ḥadīth al-Ghadīr]

The most explicit statement of the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) about Imamate is the Tradition of Ghadīr [*Ḥadīth al-Ghadīr*]. According to historians, on his way home from his Farewell Pilgrimage [*Ḥajj al-Wadā‘*], the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) received a Qur'anic verse [*āyah*] in a place called Ghadīr Khumm in which he was commanded to convey a message to the people, and he was inspired that if this message were not conveyed, his prophetic mission as a whole would not be

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1- *Sūrah Shū‘arā'* 26:214: *"Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk."*

2- This account is recorded as *Ḥadīth ad-Dār* in Sunnī history books. For example, see *Tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī*, vol. 2, pp. 319-321; *Al-Kāmil fi't-Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 62; Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 13, pp. 22, 244; *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, vol. 15, p. 115. The text of the *ḥadīth* is as follows: "Verily, this is my brother, executor of will and my caliph after me. So, listen to him and obey him."

3- Known as *Ḥadīth ath-Thaqalayn*, this statement is recorded without a broken chain of transmission [*mutawātir*] from the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*). It is narrated by 53 companions of the Prophet (*ṣ*) [*ṣaḥābah*] and recorded in more than 200 Sunnī books on history, tradition and Qur'anic exegesis [*tafsīr*]. See, for example, *Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 873; *Ṣaḥīḥ Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, p. 663; *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 5, p. 182; *Sunan ad-Dāramī*, vol. 2, p. 231.

4- This statement of Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ*) is known as *Ḥadīth as-Safīnah*, narrated by famous *ṣaḥābah* such as ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khidri, Anas ibn Mālik, and others, and recorded in Sunnī books.

5- In some of these narrations, the names of the twelve caliphs or Imāms are mentioned while in some others only the names of the first and the last.

fulfilled.[1] As soon as he received this verse, he decided to convey the message and gathered the people for this purpose. In this historic speech, he first asked the people: "Am I not your master [*mawlā*]?" When the people replied in the affirmative, he held and raised the hand of 'Alī (*'a*) declared him as the guardian or master [*walī*] after him. Then, the verse on the perfection of the religion and the completion of God's favor was revealed whereby the universality of Islam and God being pleased with this revered religion was highlighted.[2]

This event is recorded in history and books of *ḥadīth* as indisputably authentic, and more than a hundred companions of the Prophet (*ṣ*) [*ṣaḥābah*] have narrated it. From the beginning of the second century up to the fourth century AH, more than 360 Muslim scholars have reported this event.[3] Many books have also been written about the Tradition of Ghadīr. There is no doubt about the event and the statement of the Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*). If there is any difference between the Sunnīs and the Shī'ah, it is in the interpretation of the Prophet's (*ṣ*) statements. The Shī'ah believe that the use of the word *walī* was in the sense of 'Alī (*'a*) being the leader of Islamic society, while the Sunnīs are of the opinion that by using this word the Apostle (*ṣ*) only wanted to introduce 'Alī (*'a*) as "a person who must be respected and befriended by everybody."[4]

In examining the Sunnī interpretation of the event in Ghadīr, it is necessary to consider the following points:

1. According to what Muslim exegetes [*mufassirīn*] have reported, this event took place after God commanded the Prophet (*ṣ*) to fulfill his duty and convey to the people a particular message, and after the conveyance of that message, the perfection of the religion and the completion of God's favor would be fulfilled. As such, apart from being consistent with the purport of the two above mentioned verses,

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[1] *Sūrah Mā'idah* 5:67: *"O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message."*

[2] *Sūrah Mā'idah* 5:3.

[3] See 'Allāmah Amīnī, *Al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 14-151.

[4] Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Al-Murāja'āt*, Correspondences 57-58.

the message must be so important that its conveyance would signify the fulfillment of the prophetic mission and, in case of failure to convey it, it would mean that the religion of God would be imperfect and His favor incomplete. Obviously, respect and friendship, even if it be for 'Alī (*'a*), would not be important enough to signify the fulfillment of the prophetic mission. On the contrary, it is negligence regarding the designation of the intellectual authority and religious leadership which could be tantamount to negligence in the fulfillment of the prophetic mission and bring about the imperfection of the religion.

2. In this *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) asked those who were present: "Have I not more authority over you than yourselves?" All replied in unison: "Yes, it is so."

This question is a hint—no, not just a hint, but an explicit referral, to this verse: *"The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls"*[1] which clearly proves the Prophet's (*ṣ*) authority [*wilāyah*] over the Islamic society. After the people acknowledged his *wilāyah*, the Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) said: "Of whomsoever I am master [*mawlā*], 'Alī is also his master [*mawlā*]." The rule of relationship among the parts of the sentence suggests that the *wilāyah* of 'Alī (*'a*) indicated therein is the same *wilāyah* of the Prophet (*ṣ*) which has been acknowledged by the people.

3. Love of 'Alī (*'a*) and the Prophet's *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) is something commanded also by the Qur'an, describing it as a sign of faith.[2] This fact is not something unmentioned in the Qur'an beforehand such that the failure to announce it would be considered imperfection of religion and negligence of a prophetic duty.

4. After this conveyance of the Apostle (*ṣ*), Abū Bakr and 'Umar (later to become the first and second caliphs) congratulated 'Alī (*'a*), each of them saying: "O son of Abū Ṭālib! You became my master [*mawlā*] and the master [*mawlā*] of every Muslim, man and woman."

1- *Sūrah Aḥzāb* 33:6.

2- *Sūrah Shūrā* 42:23: *"Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives."*

From this event which happened in the presence of a large group of Muslims and which was recorded in history, it can be deduced that the audience or addressees of this message understood *wilāyah* not in the sense of "friendship and support" because the expression, "You became my *mawlā*" is consistent only with *wilāyah* in the sense of authority and leadership.

5. In the same gathering, after being granted permission by the Prophet (*ṣ*), Ḥassān ibn Thābit, a famous Arab poet, versified the historic event of Ghadīr as follows:

فقال له: قم يا عليّ فإنّني رضيتك من بعدي إماماً و هاديا

> *Then he said: "Stand up O 'Alī! For, I am indeed well pleased that you are the Imām and guide after me."*[1]

The words "Imām" and "guide" [*hādī*] used in the verses clearly show that the true meaning and implication in the statement of the Prophet (*ṣ*) was that of *wilāyah* in the sense of authority and leadership.

This specific understanding of Imamate, especially in the event of Ghadīr Khumm, had always been confirmed and emphasized by the Imāms (*'a*).[2] It is clear, therefore, that Shī'ism as a school of thought is a distinct understanding and interpretation of the religion of Islam and the prophetic message. Historically, it can be traced back to the time of the prophetic call. Contrary to the notion of some people, Shī'ism is not a school of thought which was later formed based on the emotions or feelings of a group. The necessity of the designation of the Imām as substantiated by religious text [*naṣṣ*] is exactly based on the Prophetic *Sunnah*. According to this viewpoint, based upon his divine mission, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) has set the way of the Imāms and their leadership as the guarantor of the felicity of mankind.

1- Khwārazmī al-Mālikī, *Al-Manāqib*, p. 80; Sibṭ ibn Jawzī al-Ḥanafī, *Tadhkirat Khawāṣ al-Ummah*, p. 20; Ganjī Shāfi'ī, *Kifāyah aṭ-Ṭālib*, p. 17; and others. [Trans.]

2- For example, it is mentioned by Imām 'Alī (*'a*) as narrated by Ibn Ḥijr in *Lisān al-Mīzān*, vol. 2, p. 285 and *Aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah*, p. 126; adh-Dhahabī in *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, vol. 1, p. 441; Qundūzī in *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 134, *bāb* 38; Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 1, p. 119; Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (*'a*) in *Al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, p. 197.

The role of the Imāms (‘a)

It is evident that the digression in the history of Islam and the society's refusal to accept the authority of the Imāms (*‘a*) hindered the materialization of the true and essential role of Imamate in the Islamic society. Yet, it must not be imagined that the Imāms (*‘a*) had an insignificant contribution in the development of Islamic culture and civilization. In spite of events, the role of the Imāms (*‘a*) in fostering spirituality and religious sense, strengthening ideological foundations, expounding Islamic law [*sharī‘ah*], interpreting the Qur'an, and sharpening the sociopolitical insight of Muslims has been considerable and fundamental. They have been the fountains of spirituality, the standard-bearers of the Prophetic *Sunnah* and Qur'anic culture, and the tributes of the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*), and they have always been the focus of attention of the Islamic society.

A cursory glance at the history of Islam during the period of the Imāms (*‘a*) shows well the following points:

1. A significant part of the religion of Islam consists of its worldview and ideological principles. The people's understanding and interpretation of Islam depends on the extent and quality of their understanding of its ideological elements. If the public sphere of a society is away from the true understanding of these elements, this society will fall into the abyss of ideological deviation. When the Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) is not present in the Islamic society and the grounds for encountering other cultures gradually increase, it is to be feared that ideological deviation and superstition might threaten the culture of society. The pivotal role of the great scholars who have acquired correct understanding of religion from credible sources during such times is critically important. In dealing with ideas such as extremism [*ghulū*], predetermination [*jabr*], *tafwīḍ*,[1] anthropomorphism, and many others, the Imāms (*‘a*) as the intellectual authorities have had a crucial role in guiding the people. Sublime subjects contained in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, *aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-*

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[1] *Tafwīḍ*: the belief that after creating all beings, God has left them to administer their own affairs and follow their own wills. In other words, it is the upholding of freewill [*ikhtiyār*] vis-à-vis predestination. [Trans.]

Sajjādiyyah[1] and narrations [*riwāyāt*] of the Imāms (*'a*) bear testimony to this fact.[2]

2. It is clear that in view of the limited time and the absence of total stability of the Islamic state, the Prophet (*ṣ*) did not have the opportunity to mention and experience all the needs of the society regarding Islamic law. Many needs came to light after him over the course of time. In that situation, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣ*) were naturally consulted, but the existence of different interpretations of these two sources entailed differences and discord. In that state of affairs, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*), as the true scholars and those knowledgeable of the Book and the *Sunnah*, played a key role. The extant numerous narrations from the Imāms (*'a*) prove that the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) had a significant contribution in expounding the Islamic law and training religious scholars and jurists [*fuqahā*].[3] It is interesting to note that a number of Sunnī *fuqahā* have been students of the Imāms (*'a*). By giving lessons to thousands of students, Imāms al-Bāqīr[4] and aṣ-Ṣādiq[5] (*'a*) have indeed played a decisive role in training Sunnī and Shī'ah *'ulamā'*.

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[1] The book of fifty-seven prayers known as *aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah (al-Kāmilah) as-Sajjādiyyah*, which is one of the major Islamic manuals of supplications, was transmitted from Imām Zayn al-'Ābīdīn as-Sajjād, the fourth of the Twelve Imāms and the only son of Imām Ḥusayn to survive the massacre at Karbala. See *Ṣaḥīfah al-Kāmilah*, http://www.al-islam.org/sahifa. [Trans.]

[2] In addition, many volumes of narrations on beliefs can be observed in books on *ḥadīth* such as Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* and Shaykh aṣ-Ṣadūq, *At-Tawḥīd*.

[3] Many collections of juristic narrations have been compiled in books of *ḥadīth* the most famous of which is *Wasā'il ash-Shī'ah* by Shaykh Ḥurr al-'Āmilī.

[4] Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir: the fifth Imām from the Holy Prophet's Progeny. He was born in 57 AH/675 CE and spent most of his life in Medina, until his martydom there in 114 AH/732 CE. See Bāqir Sharīf al-Qarashi, *The Life of Imām Mohammed al-Bāqir*, trans. Jāsim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1999). [Trans.]

[5] Ja'far ibn Muḥammad (*'a*) entitled, *aṣ-Ṣādiq* [The Truthful]," is the sixth Imām from the Prophet's Progeny (83-148 AH). Many of the Sunnī and Shī'ah *'ulamā* and scholars attended his teaching classes and seminars. Narrators of tradition have quoted the number of Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq's students as four thousand. The socio-economic conditions of his time necessitated utmost efforts to be made by the Imam (*'a*) in the areas of expanding authentic and original Islamic teachings and in the training and education of the faithful students. For this reason the books of tradition and other books quote and cite more traditions from Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣadiq than from

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3. As the spiritual and moral guides of the Islamic society, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*‘a*) have had an undeniable impact in morally training the Muslims and spiritually nurturing them. Apart from the Shī‘ah who believe in the Imāms (*‘a*) as having lofty stations, others have always considered the Imāms (*‘a*) as their practical moral and spiritual guides and have been greatly influenced by the Imāms’ spiritual merits.

Moreover, the valuable propagational role of the Imāms (*‘a*) and their extremely profound and sublime supplications, which up to now have spiritually adorned the Muslim society, must not be forgotten. These individuals from the progeny of the Prophet (*ṣ*) who were at the peak of spirituality, morality and insight kept the sparks of spirituality in Muslim society illuminated.

4. For the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid rulers, the infallible Imāms (*‘a*) were the main threats to their despotic rule, because the Imāms (*‘a*) consistently propounded that their right to rule had been usurped, and that the caliphate was a fundamental departure from the political philosophy of Islam. Because they put forward this belief and because they were figures in the station of Imamate—and in view of their relation to the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*)—they could always keep the torches of justice and anti-oppression illuminated in the hearts of the people. The spiritual power of the Imāms (*‘a*) as the righteous descendants of the Apostle (*ṣ*) had always threatened the rule of tyrants and frightened the oppressive caliphs. Their persistent decisions to persecute and martyr the infallible Imāms (*‘a*) were signs of this fear and apprehension.

The opinions of the Imāms (*‘a*) have been known to the people in every period. Everybody knew that the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid caliphs had basically never recognized the legitimacy of the Prophet’s progeny (*‘a*). As such, many Shī‘ah would not even refer to judges appointed by the government and, based on the religious teachings, they regarded referral to these judges as tantamount to disbelief [*kufr*].[1] It is true that the principle of dissimulation [*taqiyyah*][1] served

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any other infallible Imāms. See Shaykh Moḥammed al-Ḥusayn al-Muẓaffar, *Imām Al-Ṣādiq*, trans. Jāsim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1998). [Trans.]

[1] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 67.

as an important rule in the sociopolitical life of the Shīʻah, but the opposition of the Imāms (*ʻa*) to the rule of the caliphs was no secret. The caliphs had always felt threatened by them and strived to uproot their spiritual and social standing in society.

In view of the aforementioned points, it can be concluded that in addition to the intellectual current called Shīʻism, in which the basis is the Imāms' interpretation of religion and leadership of the Shīʻah who had always been a significant part of the Muslim society, the contributions of the Imāms (*ʻa*) in the ideological, moral, legal, and political spheres are indeed significant and known to all.

Philosophy of occultation [ghaybah]

With the acceptance of Imamate as one of the principles of Shīʻah faith, the following questions are raised: According to the Shīʻah viewpoint and ideological foundations, Imamate is an essential principle, therefore what is the justification for occultation [*ghaybah*]? Since divine wisdom demands the existence of an Imām in every period, how is the long deprivation of the Muslim society from Imamate justified and analyzed?

The answer to these questions can be inferred from the following points:

1. As stated earlier, only general *imāmah* can be proved rationally, but based on divine exigency, [the philosophy behind] the number of Imāms (*ʻa*) is unknown to us and we cannot comprehend it based on rational means.

2. The presence of an Imām is a grace from God, but the deprivation from the presence of an Imām can be traced back to the actions of the

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1- *Taqiyyah*: prudential dissimulation of one's true beliefs under conditions of acute danger to one's life, property, or honor, a practice based on Qur'an, 3:28. As its observance depends on certain terms and conditions, it may be obligatory [*wājib*], recommended [*mustaḥab*], abominable [*makrūh*], or forbidden [*ḥarām*]. For a discussion of *taqiyyah*, see Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *Taqiyyah* (Dar es Salaam: Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, 1992), http://www.al-islam.org/taqiyyah; *Al-Taqiyya/Dissimulation*, http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter6b.html; and 'Allamah Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam* (Albany, N.Y., 1975), pp. 223-225, http://www.al-islam.org/anthology. [Trans.]

people.[1] This deprivation also existed to some extent during the periods of the Imāms (*ʻa*) prior to the 12th Imām (*ʻa*).

3. The people's open connection to the hidden Imām (*ʻatfs*)[2] is in abeyance as far as his two functions of religious authority and political leadership are concerned, but the Imām's esoteric Imamate continues and the people benefit from the blessing of his existence.

At this time, the Imām (*ʻatfs*) is like the sun behind the clouds. Just as the sun behind the clouds is beneficial, the Imām (*ʻatfs*) has an esoteric connection with his Shīʻah and the people are able to benefit from the blessing of his existence. Basically, the world exists owing to his existence and this function of the Imām which is "ontological guardianship" [*wilāyat-e takwīnī*], "spiritual guardianship" [*wilāyat-e maʻnawī*] or "esoteric Imamate" [*imāmat-e bāṭinī*] does not depend on his physical presence.

Keeping in view the above mentioned points, the principle of the occultation of the Imām (*ʻatfs*) is compatible with the general theory on Imamate and it is here that the dynamic idea of "waiting" [*intiẓār*] takes form. It is true that this idea also exists in other religions,[3] but in Islam to wait for the day when the Savior [*munjī*] removes oppression from the world, turned the imaginary state of a totally hidden subject into a belief about a true celestial living being. Attention to a savior in the future turned attention to a living person who, along with all other people, is also waiting. He lives with us and actually feels our pains and sufferings.[4] Waiting is a positive and constructive idea, entailing many benefits some of which are as follows:

a. The belief that the people are attached to his rule and consider other governments as usurpers is a kind of idealism, fundamentalism and

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1- See ʻAllāmah Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād fī Tajrīd al-Iʻtiqād*, Section on Imamate.

2- The abbreviation, ʻ*atfs* stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *ʻajjalallāhu taʻālā farajah ash-sharīf* [may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent], which is invoked after mentioning the name of Imām al-Mahdī (ʻ*atfs*). [Trans.]

3- See Muḥammad Riḍā Ḥakīmī, *Khurshīd-e Maghrib*, chaps. 4-6; Ṣāfī Gulpāygānī, *Muntakhab al-Āthār*.

4- See Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Ṣadr, *Baḥth Ḥawl al-Mahdī*, p. 55.
The book's English translation is *An Inquiry Concerning Al-Mahdī* (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1980). [Trans.].

legalism in their individual, social and political beliefs. It is exactly like the condition of a people who, on account of particular political conditions, feel as if their Imām is in exile and believe that they must pave the grounds for his advent or reappearance. As such, "waiting" [*intiẓār*] and "protest" [*i'tirāḍ*] from the Shī'ah viewpoint is an intellectual tradition within the core of the Shī'ah political thought, and Imamate has not ended with the occultation of the last Imām (*'atfs*) but it rather continues in a particular way.

b. "Waiting" naturally gives direction to the human perspective as well as meaning to the future. It removes despair and hopelessness from the hearts of humanity. It gives purpose to their actions and makes them more ready to show all their talents. Hence, "waiting for deliverance [by the Imām's advent]" [*intiẓār al-faraj*] has been described as the activity of the Prophet's *ummah*.[1]

"Waiting" has made the Shī'ah always endure difficulties and afflictions with optimism and dynamism and given them a profound perspective and positive orientation. Individuals whose aspiration it is to implement global justice, righteous government, benevolent administration, human dignity, and freedom from oppression no doubt follow a correct, lofty, goal-oriented, and divine social philosophy, and these are among the blessings of "waiting" and effects of the occultation [*ghaybah*].

c. The meaningfulness of history and the glad tidings of victory for the faithful, which have also been repeated many times in the Qur'an, is one of the secrets of *ghaybah*. The promises for the faithful to inherit the earth, their assumption of power, the establishment of the government of faith, the unification of religion, the unification of government, and the unity of society, among others, give enthusiasm to the faithful to engage in social struggle.[2] From the Islamic viewpoint, therefore, the philosophy of history acquires a particular meaning. Accordingly, the future is not a condemnation of the will of the powerful and the arrogant. Rather, the will of God will prevail through the establishment of a benevolent state, the dominance of the divine religion, and the prevalence of divine values throughout the world. Therefore, history is leading us towards a positive future.

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[1] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl*, p. 37.

[2] See *Sūrah Anbiyā'* 21:105; *Sūrah Nūr* 24:55; *Sūrah Qaṣaṣ* 28:5.

d. "Waiting" requires emphasis on values and negation of anti-values. These ideals embellish the sociopolitical view of the faithful. The faithful who are eager to implement social justice and the rule of values will never submit to deviant viewpoints and always focus their attention on a better society and a righteous world.

The spirit of waiting is an emphasis on the theory of Imamate and the negation of any dispute over it. The Shīʻah waits for his Imām and this negates the sovereignty of any other.

e. For those who wait for the Imām [*muntaẓirīn*], any social change is valuable provided that it contributes in the realization of the ideals of the period of occultation. Thus, "waiting" itself is a positive social movement and a sublime idea within a revolutionary thought. For this reason, in terms of implementation, objectives, achievements, and elements the Islamic Revolution in Iran must be compatible with the ideals of the period of waiting. "Waiting" teaches the Shīʻah not to gather under any banner that is incompatible with the global revolution of the Mahdī (*ʻatfs*).

Moreover, the ideal or aspiration of "waiting" gives a particular rationality to the Revolution. Since the period of occultation is always a period of waiting, the revolution constantly continues in different aspects until the establishment of the global government of the Mahdī (*ʻatfs*).

f. Belief in Imamate during the period of waiting endows humanity with the opportunity to follow the perfect man [*insān al-kāmil*] (of his time). Based on following the perfect man, the waiting person is always strengthening himself spiritually.

A question

Given the prolongation of the period of occultation, the following questions may be raised: How can it be accepted that a hidden Imām is living with us? Or, is not the belief that a perfect man could be living with us for so long in occultation a superstitious one?

In reply to these question, some points are worth considering:

Firstly, the reality of the occultation of the Mahdī (*'atfs*) has been mentioned by the infallible Imāms (*'a*). Therefore, those who believe in the truthfulness of Imāms (*'a*) can easily accept the 12th Imām's (*'atfs*) occultation.[1] The acceptance of the long life of an Imām who is commissioned by God is not an unusual thing in religious culture.

حکیمی کین جهان پاینده دارد
تواند حجّتی را زنده دارد

The All-wise Who created this world,
Can prolong the life of a proof.

Also, the event of the birth of the Imām of the Time (*'a*) has been mentioned in history and books of tradition [*ḥadīth*], and even those who witnessed the event have been identified.[2]

Secondly, the Imām of the Time (*'atfs*) was in minor occultation [*ghaybah aṣ-ṣughrā*] for around 70 years[3] during which period, the proof of his existence had been well known to the Shī'ah. Through his special deputies [*nawwāb*], he had contact with the people. Apart from the four special deputies, he had also appointed his representatives [*wukalā*] in different cities and towns. Naturally, his deputies and representatives were men of distinction and honor. It is absurd to think that distinguished men would have been in contact with an imaginary and superstitious person for 70 years. During that period, many individuals had submitted their requests to the Imām (*'atfs*) through his envoys, and in reply to some of them, the hidden Imām (*'atfs*) had written letters. These letters are technically called *tawqī'* some of which are recorded in *ḥadīth* books.

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[1] See *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, "Kitāb al-Ḥujjah," Bāb fī'l-Ghaybah"; *Biḥar al-Anwār*, vol. 51, p. 110.

[2] Gulpāygānī, *Muntakhab al-Āthār*, p. 355.

[3] During the first 70 years of his Imamate, the Imām of the Time (*'atfs*) had special deputies to manage on behalf of the Imām the affairs of the Shī'ah. This period is known as the minor occultation.

Imamate and the duty of the faithful [mu’minīn]

After the acceptance of Imamate as an ideological principle, this question is raised: What is the duty of a faithful believer with respect to the principle of Imamate?

Undoubtedly, the primary requisite of the belief in the Imām (*‘atfs*) is that we have to accept the way of the Imāms (*‘a*) as our intellectual, ideological and practical reference. This means that alongside the Qur’an, we have to give importance to the sayings and actions of the infallible Imāms (*‘a*). Relying only on the Qur’an and ignoring the authentic narrations is tantamount to ignoring the intellectual authority of the infallible Imāms (*‘a*) which is in no way compatible with true Shī‘ah doctrines.

Thus, one of the duties of the faithful is to love their Imāms (*‘a*). In the Holy Qur’an, love of the Prophet’s (*ṣ*) relatives [*dhū ’l-qurbā*] has been mentioned as the reward for his prophetic mission.[1] Many of the laws and rules of etiquette prescribed in Shī‘ah collections of law for the people are meant to attain the station of affection—nay love—of the pure Imāms (*‘a*). In the Shī‘ah way of thinking, the Imām is the theoretical and practical leader to whom the people have also deep emotional attachment.

The emphasis on the performance of pilgrimages [*ziyārāt*] and establishment of esoteric relationship with the Imām (*‘atfs*) which are common in Shī‘ah tradition generates a particular disposition in the faithful. Attachment to the truth and the truthful [*tawallā*] and the establishment of affectionate relationship lead to the intellectual and emotional fondness of the faithful to the perfect man.

This characteristic naturally influences the political insight and attitude of the faithful. Love of those who have dedicated themselves to the religion and the struggle against the *ṭāghūt* makes the heart of the faithful overflowing with abhorrence and disgust for the oppressors and infidels. As such, *tawalli* and *tabarri* [disgust for falsehood and the people of falsehood] have a pivotal role in the attitudes and interactions of the faithful society.

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[1] *Sūrah Shūrā* 42:23: *“Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.”*

Apart from purifying man's soul, love of the Imāms (*'a*) generates similar loves, embellishes his beliefs, organizes his actions, fosters idealism, and cleanses his sociopolitical insight and outlook.

Meanwhile, the people have been invited to take the Imāms (*'a*) as their mediators in their supplications and connections to God. In our religious sources, supplication without any mediator or medium [*wasīlah*] has been described as defective and unanswered.

The practice of *tawassul*[1] which is one of the elements of the Shī'ah beliefs is in no way incompatible or inconsistent with monotheism [*tawḥīd*]. It is rather the acceptance of a kind of linear system in the relationship with the Creator. In the Shī'ah culture, the Imām is the embodiment of *tawḥīd* on earth. In establishing communication with him, the people are actually connected with the vicegerent of God and this never contradicts the sovereignty of God. In fact, it is exactly dependence on God. *Tawassul* is the fostering of a special type of spiritual thinking in which the perfect man is highlighted and in the relationship between human and God the existence of the Imām is not ignored. In principle, the term *tawassul,* or resorting to intermediaries, is the promotion of the idea that God is the Essence of the universe and through the means of *tawassul* we seek to connect to this Essence. In this idea, the Imām is the cord of Allah [*ḥabl Allāh*]. By clinging to this cord, the people provide the means for their improvement and proximity to God. Just as facing the *qiblah* (the *Ka'bah*) is a manifestation of *tawḥīd* and can never be considered worship of an object, turning to the Imāms (*'a*) and seeking their intermediation is also not a negation of *tawḥīd*. In fact, the Imāms (*'a*) are *the spiritual ka'bah of the hearts*. By drawing the people toward *it* (the more they pay attention to the Imāms (*'a*)) the more their belief in God will increase.

The other duty of the faithful is to increase their knowledge of the Imāms ('a). In religious sources, it is stated that knowledge of God depends on knowledge of the Imāms ('a).2 In the words of the Imām

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1- *Tawassul*: literally, to resort to intermediaries. Technically, it refers to the practice of petition prayer addressed to God through a holy personage such as a prophet [*nabī*] or a saint [*walī*]. [Trans.]

2- *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, p. 312 as narrated from Imām al-Ḥusayn (*'a*).

(‘a) himself, it is thus narrated: “God has no sign greater and more important than us for the people[1] and had it not been for us, God would not have been recognized (as He ought to be recognized).”[2]

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[1] *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 207.

[2] Shaykh aṣ-Ṣadūq, *At-Tawḥīd*, p. 290.

Section Two

Period of Occultation

General Objectives

After studying this discourse, students are expected:

1. To know the continuity of the interpretation and practice of religion during this period of occultation;
2. To be acquainted with the characteristics and sources of *ijtihād*; and
3. To know some rational and textual proofs for the guardianship of the jurist [*wilāyah al-faqīh*] and be acquainted with its theoretical dimensions.

Introduction

Since the Imām of the Time (*'atfs*) is not present during the period of occultation, flawless interpretation of the religion is naturally not possible and there is deprivation of ideal political leadership. So, the function of religious authority and political leadership of the Imām (*'atfs*) is not exercised.

As such, the people will be deprived of the religious authority and political leadership of the infallible Imām (*'atfs*) and they have no option but to engage in "waiting". However, these questions are raised: Has the religion of Islam offered a solution to these two important issues (interpretation and implementation of the religion)? Or, have the Imāms (*'a*) shown a way to their Shī'ah during the period of occultation? We shall examine the reply to these related questions in the two succeeding sections on religious authority and political leadership.

Religious authority

Without doubt, flawless interpretation of the religion comes to an end with the occultation of the infallible Imām (*'atfs*). During this period, nothing further will be added to the corpus of the *ḥadīth* of the Infallibles (*'a*) and the main religious sources. From the existing religious sources, which include the traditions of the Infallibles (*'a*), the religious duties of the faithful can be inferred such that they have sufficient basis for the performance of duties. However, all people cannot deduce their duties from the religious sources. Therefore, naturally, they must refer to those who are capable of doing this important task. In this manner, during the occultation of the Imām (*'atfs*) the position of intellectual authority is assumed by the *'ulamā'*—who are well-versed in religious principles and capable of deducing the laws.

Of course, even during the time of the presence of the Imāms (*'a*), not all people had the opportunity to consult the Imām of their time. Due to distance, many had become acquainted with their religious duties through local *'ulamā'* while the latter had greater chances of consulting the Imām of their time. During the period of occultation, however, there is no option but to refer to the *'ulamā'*. The *'ulamā'* are those who are capable of deducing laws from the religious sources. This capability is technically called *ijtihād* and one who possesses this capability is known as a *mujtahid*.

Of course, in addition to *ijtihād* the intellectual authority has other required qualities such as God-wariness [*taqwā*] and knowledge of the state of affairs of his own time. Hence, the *mujtahidīn* are the intellectual and religious authorities of the people during the period of occultation.[1]

Salient features of ijtihād

1. *Non-monopoly.* As defined earlier, *ijtihād* is not a monopoly of a particular social group or class. Anyone with the required intellectual and moral qualities can be the intellectual authority. As such, according to the Shī'ah, no particular class or stratum of society is presented as the intellectual and religious authority of the people.

2. *Accessibility of ijtihād.* In the Shī'ah school of thought, anyone can acquire the competence to exercise *ijtihād* within a specific set of rules. In the Sunnī school of thought, the door of *ijtihād* is closed.[2] The Sunnī *'ulamā'* have to express views within the framework of

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[1] 1- See books on jurisprudence, the section regarding *ijtihād* and *taqlīd*.

[2] 2- See Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Al-Murājā'at*, Correspondence 4.

ijtihādī viewpoints of a certain number of their great *mujtahidīn*. According to the Shī'ah teachings, however, the *'ulamā'* always have the right to exercise *ijtihād*. Basically, the scholars who are competent to practice *ijtihād* are not obliged to practice *taqlīd*, for they have to act upon their personal *ijtihād*.[1] So, it is possible to have different *ijtihād*s and juristic opinions at one time. It is even possible for a *mujtahid* to express diverse opinions over the course of time and recant his former religious edict [*fatwā*].

3. *Ijtihād as rule-based. Ijtihād* as a method of understanding the *sharī'ah* depends on a set of rules. In other words *ijtihād*, which is the process of arriving at a specific understanding of the religion, is considered *ijtihād* only when it is derived through a specified logic. Understanding which is not anchored in technical and systematic *ijtihād* is speculative interpretation [*tafsīr bi'r-rayy*] which is devoid of any value.

Of course, it must be noted that systematic understanding does not always arrive at truth and unambiguous law. For this reason, unlike the understanding of the infallible Imāms (*'a*), the theory of *ijtihād* is not considered a flawless pillar of the religion. Rather, at most it is an understanding which serves as a proof [*ḥujjah*] for the *mujtahid* and those who emulate him [*muqallidīn*].

Therefore, the concept of "proof" [*ḥujjiyyah*] distinguishes *ijtihād* from speculative interpretation [*tafsīr bi'r-rayy*]. Forbidding of speculative interpretation starts exactly from the moment when systematic reasoning is lost. As such, in replying to a juristic question, a *mujtahid* must traverse difficult and tortuous ways. The reason for this is that the *faqīh* does not treat religious laws as facilitators. His aim is to try his best so that his deduction is within the framework of a set of rules and this is the reason for the concern for credibility—so that it may serve as "proof".

4. *Dynamism of ijtihād.* Since Islam is the final religion, it must be able to offer answers to the problems and predicaments of every age. "Final religion" means that its rules are such that they are applicable in every period. It is true that *ijtihād* is exercised within the

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[1] See books on jurisprudence, the section regarding *ijtihād* and *taqlīd*.

framework of specific rules, but it gives the *mujtahidīn* the opportunity to offer answers to the problems of his particular time by referring back to the religious sources.

In the Islamic *sharī'ah*, there are alterable elements which make it possible for laws to be implemented in different areas. Some of these elements are as follows:

a. In the Islamic *sharī'ah*, rules are presented in general form. Since the addressees of the religion are all people in all places, many of the laws are in the form of permanent rules and not confined to a particular time in history. For example, the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*[1] covers every treaty at every period.

b. In the Islamic *sharī'ah*, apart from the common laws that are implemented in normal conditions, certain laws are considered for special conditions which are called secondary laws [*al-aḥkām ath-thānawīyyah*]. These laws make it possible for the *sharī'ah* to conform to special conditions. For instance, in an emergency situation in which it is not possible to implement a mandatory law, as long as the situation is not normalized, it is not mandatory to implement it. Or, in the case that the implementation of a law causes harm to a person or persons, it must not be implemented.

c. In the Islamic *sharī'ah*, the Islamic state has a credible standing and can issue decrees while taking the society's welfare into consideration. These decrees or laws which are called "administrative decrees" [*al-Aḥkām al-Hukūmiyyeh*] gives the Islamic state the opportunity to implement the Islamic *sharī'ah* based on the welfare of Islam and the Muslims. These decrees are within the prerogatives granted to the Islamic state.

In view of the alterable elements of the Islamic *sharī'ah*, *ijtihād* is a dynamic process compatible with time and place. Therefore, time and place are two fundamental and decisive elements in the practice of *ijtihād*.

It must be noted that many items or objectives assume various forms over the course of time. In consonance with changes, laws may also change accordingly. It is possible for an object to be an instrument of gambling at a certain time and place and not so at another time and place. Or, it is possible that at a certain time to buy and sell an item is not allowed for being devoid of any rational benefit, but the same item may be allowed as a commercial commodity at another time on account of its acquisition of rational utility.

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[1] *Pacta sunt servanda*: abidance with a treaty in letter and spirit. [Trans.]

It is worth mentioning that in accordance with the famous view in Shī'ah jurisprudence, persons who are not *mujtahid* (i.e. they are not experts in deducing religious laws) must refer to a living *mujtahid*. The rule of referring to a living *mujtahid* gives the opportunity to the people to always emulate a *mujtahid* who knows the conditions and exigencies of the time and address their needs in accordance with each period.

Therefore, *ijtihād* in the Islamic culture, especially in the Shī'ah conception, has the necessary dynamism in conforming the religious laws to current problems while ensuring that it is within the framework of its conventional rules. While connecting to the religious tradition, it addresses the needs of the changing world.

It must be added that these are the salient features of *ijtihād*. *Ijtihād* is a process which can discharge this responsibility well. However, the absence of answers to some problems in their various dimensions is not an indication of the failure or futility of *ijtihād*. Rather, the reason for this is that sometimes all the potential of *ijtihād* in different areas are not utilized.

Sources of ijtihād

For the Shī'ah, *ijtihād* is performed based on the four famous sources, viz. the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, reason [*'aql*], and consensus [*ijmā'*]. The Qur'an is the primary source of the religion and it is the basis of deducing religious views.

Along with the Qur'an, since the *Sunnah* serves as the elucidation, explanation and elaboration of the Qur'an, the authentic and credible narrations constitute a vital source, such that without them one cannot content himself with the Qur'an. Many religious laws cannot be inferred by only referring to the Qur'an. In essence, the basic function of the *Sunnah* is to elaborate the subjects concisely mentioned in the Qur'an.

Apart from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, which are considered the textual sources of *ijtihād*, the intellect or reason [*'aql*] is presented as one of the sources of deducing laws. Since religion and reason are totally compatible and concordant, definite rational laws are substantiated by religion.[1]

Consensus [*ijmā'*] is the fourth source of *ijtihād*. *Ijmā'* means the agreement of *'ulamā'* on a religious law such that through this agreement, the view of the Infallibles (*'a*) can be inferred. In other words, *ijmā'* in Shī'ah *ijtihād* is a specific kind of agreement among *'ulamā'* which uncovers the view of the Infallibles (*'a*) on a particular issue. Therefore, mere consensus of a number of *'ulamā'* and *mujtahidīn* on a religious law cannot be considered credible *ijmā'* just because it closes the door for other *mujtahidīn*. Rather, this consensus must be such that it establishes its concordance with the pertinent view of the Infallibles (*'a*).

Hence, Shī'ah *ijtihād* is practiced only within the framework of these four sources, and the logic of inferring the *sharī'ah* is also put into action within this parameter. Every proof which is claimed to be the basis of understanding the religion has no option but to come from one of these four sources. As such, it becomes clear that:

Firstly, sufficing with only the Qur'an in understanding Islamic law and searching for all the answers in it alone is an exercise in futility and an unacceptable inference.

Secondly, relying on rationalization and personal inferences is acceptable provided only that it is substantiated by definite proof and evidence.

Thirdly, custom or usage is not automatically credible unless it is substantiated by reason or the *Sunnah*. In other words, if a customarily accepted rule is consistent with explicit dictate of reason or because of its persistence from the time of the Imāms (*'a*) up to the present, meaning that it is evident that it is approved by them, such a rule can

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1- Obviously, indefinite laws cannot automatically be considered religious laws. Contrary to Sunnī *ijtihād* in which indefinite and hypothetical laws are sometimes treated as proof, in Shī'ah *ijtihād* such is not the case.

be considered a religious rule or decree. Otherwise, it cannot be considered an integral part of the *sharī'ah*.

Leadership

The issue of leadership during the period of occultation can be examined in two perspectives, viz. rational [*'aqlī*] and textual [*naqlī*]. Here, we shall discuss them separately as "rational proof" and "textual proof":

1. Rational proof

The rational approach to the issue of leadership is based on the following preliminary points:

1. From the Shī'ah viewpoint, during the presence of the Imāms (*'a*) the leadership of the Islamic *ummah* rested on the shoulders of the infallible Imāms and the religious laws were implemented in the society by the Imām of every period who was the vicegerent of Allah and His Messenger (*ṣ*). Since God has introduced them as the leaders of the *ummah*, the rule of any other was naturally a usurpation of the authority [*wilāyah*] of God, the Messenger (*ṣ*) and the Imāms (*'a*). The people were duty-bound to pave the ground for the rule of the Imām of their time.

2. The sovereignty of God in the sphere of legislation demands that the government during the period of occultation must also serve the interests of the *sharī'ah* in the realms of actions, decisions and laws. It cannot be accepted that the religion is accepted and God is the Sovereign and yet the Islamic laws are not implemented. Thus, as a rational necessity emanating from the sovereignty of God, the Islamic laws must be implemented.[1]

3. Implementation of Islamic laws necessitates a decision-making body or state. The verdicts of the *sharī'ah* regarding different areas such as economics, politics, *ḥudūd*,[2] retribution and punishment, training and education, and so on cannot be implemented without the existence of a government. Just as earning a livelihood necessitates

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[1] See Imām Khomeinī, *Al-Bay'*, vol. 2, pp. 461, 464.

[2] *Ḥudūd* (literally meaning boundaries or limits) in the Islamic law are generally applied to penal law for punishments prescribed for particular crimes whose extent is determined by law. [Trans.]

the establishment of a government, the religion also cannot be implemented except through a powerful ruling authority. Accordingly, a government is necessary as a prerequisite to the implementation of the religion of God.[1]

4. The existence of a government or state naturally necessitates requirements [*ilzām*] and mandates [*dastūr*]. The state presents religious orders as legal obligations. In other words, the implementation of religion lies in the government's imposition. This obligation is acceptable provided that the imposing institution has the competence to impose them. If the ruling person or body does not have this competence, he or it will have no right to rule and impose orders. In essence, such an imposing institution lacks legitimacy [*mashrū'iyyah*].

Human beings on their own capacity have no right to oblige others to do a thing and impose orders upon them unless God, who is the Real Ruler, grants such a right. This is the principle of "man's lack of authority" on the basis of which one has no authority [*wilāyah*] over another unless he has rational or textual proof to exercise such authority.

5. Since one of the elements of the Islamic government is the Islamic nature of its decisions, reason dictates that it must be headed by a person who is an expert on Islam.

6. After the acceptance of Imamate and the acknowledgment of the point that the infallible Imāms (*'a*) are the true leaders of the Islamic society (after the Prophet (*ṣ*)) and that divine sovereignty is implemented through them, religious leadership essentially belongs to the infallible Imāms (*'a*) and no other person has the right to rule except when that right is delegated to him. In the case that there is no proof of the infallible Imām's (*'atfs*) delegation of this right to a specific person, since the government cannot be without a head, the most pious and most righteous person among the Islamic scholars shall act as the Imām's deputy [*nā'ib*].[2]

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[1] *Al-Bay'*, vol. 2, pp. 461, 464.

[2] In view of the fact that the principle is the absence of authority, we cannot choose just any person to act as the Imām's deputy but must choose the best available

This view is a paraphrase of the theory of the guardianship of the jurist [*wilāyah al-faqīh*]. The concept of *wilāyah* in this context is nothing but the supervision of the Islamic society and it does not mean interdiction of the people. Even if all people have attained sufficient social maturity and rational growth, in the realm of government and collective welfare, there is still a need for an institution of leadership to maintain law and order. In the Shī'ah culture, this institution is what we called *wilāyah*.

2. Textual proof

Apart from rational proof regarding the *wilāyah* of the competent jurist or Islamic scholar, it can also be clearly inferred from sayings of the Infallibles (*'a*) that the competent jurists [*fuqahā*] and *mujtahidīn* are the deputies of the Imāms (*'a*) during the period of occultation and that the issue of leadership, like religious authority, is within the competence of the *fuqahā*. In one of his sayings, the Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) has described the *'ulamā'* as his caliphs. In reply to a question on the identity of his caliphs, the Apostle (*ṣ*) said: "They are those who narrate my *Sunnah*."[1]

Undoubtedly, the most common definition of "caliphate" is "the leadership of the *ummah*". Meanwhile, it is evident that the narrators of the *Sunnah* are those who have the competence to know the substance of religious views. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) has delegated the position of caliphate and leadership after him to the religious scholars. During the presence of the Imāms (*'a*), they were the indisputable religious scholars while during the period of occultation, the *mujtahidīn* are the narrators of religion.

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person. In a government based on religious laws, the best available person is none except the duly competent jurist [*faqīh jāmi' ash-sharāyiṭ*].

[1] This narration is recorded in *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 420. The text of the narration is as follows:

رسول الله (ص): أللّهم ارحم خلفائی. قیل یا رسول الله! و من خلفاؤک؟ قال الذین یأتون من بعدی یروون عنّی حدیثی و سنّتی.

> "The Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) said: 'O Allah! Have mercy on my caliphs.' 'Who are they, O Messenger of Allah? And who are your caliphs?' He (*ṣ*) said: 'They are those who after me shall narrate my *ḥadīth* and my *Sunnah*'."

In another narration, the Imām of the Age (*'atfs*) said about the duty of the faithful in the events to come in the future: "In such cases, refer to those who narrate our traditions. They are my proof over you and I am Allah's proof over them."[1]

Imām al-Mahdī (*'atfs*) referred his followers to the *fuqahā* and this referral is not only in explaining religious issues (religious authority) but also in matters of implementation (political leadership). In other words, both religious authority and political leadership have been delegated to the religious scholars.[2]

In these narrations, a specific *faqīh* or *mujtahid* has not been appointed for the post. Any person who possesses this competence is qualified to exercise authority [*wilāyah*]. Therefore, these narrations indicate the general *wilāyah* of the *fuqahā*. As such, during the period of oppressive governments, in judicial affairs and some issues requiring administrative decrees, the Shī'ah used to refer to the *fuqahā* as much as possible, and the *fuqahā*, in turn, used to address the affairs of the Shī'ah as much as they could.

Any objection relating to the possibility of different *fuqahā* exercising *wilāyah* at the same time is unjustifiable because in periods of *ṭāghūtī* rule every *faqīh* exercises *wilāyah* within his own jurisdiction. Whenever the leadership of a *faqīh* acquires general acceptance and he has the opportunity to administer affairs, his decree is also binding upon the other *fuqahā* within his jurisdiction and they should not independently issue administrative decrees. Thus, upon the formation of an Islamic state, a *faqīh* shall exercise *wilāyah* over the government.

There are many ways of selecting the one among the *fuqahā* to head the government. One of them is through general suffrage in the sense that the faithful pay allegiance to one of the *fuqahā* who are competent and rightful to exercise *wilāyah*. Thereafter, his view shall also be binding upon the rest of *fuqahā*.

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[1] Shaykh Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il ash-Shī'ah*, "Abwāb Ṣifāt al-Qāḍī," section 11, *ḥadīth* 9. The text of the narration is as follows:

أمّا الحوادث الواقعة فارجعوا فيها إلىٰ رواة حديثنا فانّهم حجّتي عليكم و أنا حجة الله عليهم.

[2] *Al-Bay'*, vol. 2, p. 474.

Hence, *wilāyah*, on the one hand, is an "appointed" [*intiṣābī*] position in the sense that the *fuqahā* have been designated to this position by the Imāms (*'a*). On the other hand, there is also the people's will through "election" to make "official" a *faqīh*'s *wilāyah* and the preeminence of his opinion over that of other *fuqahā* in the realm of government and public welfare.

Assuming that the selected person loses one of the required intellectual, practical or moral conditions of leadership, he is automatically removed from the position of *wilāyah*. Similarly, if a *mujtahid* loses his competence in *ijtihād*, he is automatically removed from the position of religious authority. As such, there is a system of identification in the Islamic government which constantly supervises the administrative performance of the *faqīh*. Whenever it finds out that the leader is no longer competent to administer the affairs of society, it will inform the society accordingly so that the faithful can pay allegiance to another *faqīh* who possesses all the necessary qualifications of a leader. In our Islamic system, the Assembly of Experts shoulders this responsibility. This assembly, composed of Islamic scholars and *mujtahidīn* familiar with current issues, has the prerogative to inform the people of their responsibilities toward the Leader and his leadership.[1]

Dimensions of the theory of wilāyah al-faqīh

It is said that during the period of occultation of the infallible Imām (*'a*), just as the *fuqahā* are in charge of interpreting the religion and expounding the laws, they also assume the post of leadership and implementation of the religion. The different dimensions of the theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh* will become clear through attention to the following points:

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[1] Article 107 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran thus stipulates: "(1) After the demise of Imām Khomeinī, the task of appointing the Leader shall be vested with the experts elected by the people. The experts will review and consult among themselves concerning all the religious men possessing the qualifications specified in Articles 5 and 109. In the event they find one of them better versed in Islamic regulations or in political and social issues, or possessing general popularity or special prominence for any of the qualifications mentioned in Article 109, they shall elect him as the Leader. Otherwise, in the absence of such superiority, they shall elect and declare one of them as the Leader. The Leader thus elected by the Assembly of Experts shall assume all the powers of the religious leader and all the responsibilities arising from it. (2) The Leader is equal with the rest of the people of the country in the eyes of law."

1. According to the theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh*, in terms of leadership the Islamic scholar is the successor of the infallible Imām (*'atfs*). This succession does not mean that the true station of the *faqīh* is exactly the same as that of the infallible Imām (*'atfs*). Obviously, the true position and station of the infallible Imām (*'a*) can never be assumed or occupied by anyone else. The succession of the *faqīh* encompasses only certain aspects mentioned earlier. However, the superiority of the station of the infallible Imāms (*'a*) compared with that of the *fuqahā* and religious scholars does not invalidate the fact that both the Imāms (*'a*) and the *fuqahā* must be obeyed as the leaders of society.

2. A state based on *wilāyah al-faqīh* has the necessary authority to decide on matters of public interest. Therefore, when taking public welfare, the principle of consultation and Islamic laws into consideration, the state may decide to restrict individual liberties. These prerogatives are likewise known as "absolute guardianship" [*wilāyat-e muṭlaqeh*]. Acceptance of absolute guardianship does not mean acceptance of unlimited power. In other words, "absoluteness" is not incompatible with "constitutionalism". That is, on the one hand, the Islamic government is bound to implement Islamic laws and observe Islamic standards. Even in the government of the Infallibles (*'a*), no decision which will incur the displeasure of God can ever be made.[1] On the other hand, since God has made the Imāms (*'a*) the guardians of the people and the society of the faithful and they, in turn, have delegated this position to the *fuqahā*, the latter have the right to exercise *wilāyah* within the framework of public interests and the Islamic government has the necessary prerogatives as far as this framework is concerned. Therefore, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, absoluteness can never signify disregarding religious laws. In other words, *wilāyah* is not absolute to such an extent that the religious laws can be ignored, for basically *wilāyah* is in fact intended to make the religion prevalent.

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[1] 1- *Al-Bay'*, vol. 2, p. 461.

Secondly, absoluteness does not mean that the holder of *wilāyah* can make any decision he likes. In addition to being compatible with religious laws, decisions must be consistent with the interests of people. Without taking into account the public welfare, individual interests cannot be sacrificed. In principle, in the framework of religious laws, none except the Islamic government has the right to ignore individual interests unless there is a higher set of interests at stake, i.e. the interests of society.

Thirdly, the jurist-guardian [*walī al-faqīh*] is obliged to consult with experts. Thus, absoluteness does not mean disregarding the views of other specialists. As provided for in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Expediency Council serves as the advisory body of the *walī al-faqīh* in identifying what is expedient.[1]

3. The theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh* is in no way incompatible with republicanism. Of course, *Wilāyah al-faqīh* signifies the rule of religion and naturally, with respect to the rule of divine laws, the people have no authority of their own and based on their religion, they are obliged to implement the laws of Islam. The legitimacy [*mashrū'iyyah*] of Islamic laws does not emanate from the will of the people. In the same vein, the rightfulness of the Islamic government does not depend on the inclinations of the people. It is undeniable, though, that an Islamic government is established through the determination of the people and if the people do not desire its establishment, the Islamic government can never be put into practice. Therefore, the legitimacy of a government must be distinguished from its materialization. Since the Islamic government is a means to materialize some elements of divine sovereignty, its rightfulness stems

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[1] 1- Article 112 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran thus stipulates: "(1) Upon the order of the Leader, the Nation's Exigency Council shall meet at any time the Guardian Council judges a proposed bill of the Islamic Consultative Assembly to be against the principles of *sharī'ah* or the Constitution, and the Assembly is unable to meet the expectations of the Guardian Council. Also, the Council shall meet for consideration on any issue forwarded to it by the Leader and shall carry out any other responsibility as mentioned in this Constitution. (2) The permanent and changeable members of the Council shall be appointed by the Leader. (3) The rule for the Council shall be formulated and approved by the Council members subject to the confirmation by the Leader."

from the religion. However, in many societies a religious government is not established because the people are incapable of materializing their wish. As such, the religious government has two pillars: a divine aspect—its rightfulness and legitimacy [*mashrū'iyyah*], and its people-related element which is the source of the government's acceptability [*maqbūliyyah*]. *Wilāyah* represents the first pillar of the Islamic government while republicanism is the basis of the second.

It is significant to note that the Islamic government cannot afford to disregard its acceptability, for without legitimacy it has no means to exert influence and implement its will and without influence it has no basis for the materialization of its religious aspirations. Thus, the Islamic government must be acceptable to the people both during its establishment and its perpetuity.

Given this explanation it becomes clear that *wilāyah*, as a matter of appointment [*intiṣābī*], does not signify disregard for the people's role in government; rather, it only expresses emphasis on the first element.

4. It is clear that apart from intellectual competence to identify religious views, the government is also in need of other sources of expertise. The theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh* does not mean that in the Islamic government only *fiqh* and *sharī'ah* are held in honor while other types of expertise and specializations are not shown importance. The decisions of the government are legitimate provided that they are endorsed and approved by the religious leader. It is natural, however, that these decisions must have undergone the required process and reached the stage of final approval. Certainly, in case that they require non-juristic expertise, they must undergo a specific process.

5. In the *wilāyah al-faqīh* system, the *walī al-faqīh* is both a real and legal entity. As a real entity, he is equal to all other citizens of the Islamic state in the eyes of the law. As a legal entity, he gives legitimacy to government decisions. After obtaining the approval of the *wali al-faqīh*, administrative decrees become binding to all including the *walī al-faqīh* himself and other *fuqahā*, and no one is excused.

Naturally, whenever a stated law tends to go against the interests of the people, it shall be changed through a well-defined legal mechanism except in cases where it is not possible to do so. In case of the latter, using his legal prerogative and after consultation with the concerned experts, the *walī al-faqīh* can suspend a law that tends to go against the public interest.

Therefore, "absolute guardianship" does not efface the rule of law and welfare-orientation of the society. Like all other citizens, the *walī al-faqīh* is obliged to abide by every law enacted for all. In the juristic parlance, to violate the ruler's decree is unlawful even to the ruler himself. After undergoing the entire legal process, a law is considered a ruler's decree.

6. *Wilāyah al-faqīh* does not deprive the people of any of their legitimate and legal liberties. In the system based on *wilāyah al-faqīh*, the people enjoy civil liberties and have the right to decide on their choice of occupation, place of residence, spouse, and other civil liberties related to their personal lives. Similarly, they enjoy freedom of belief and the government does not impose any particular belief upon them. Naturally, any freedom the exercise of which adversely affects collective life and public welfare lacks any legitimacy.

In the Islamic system, the people are free in their political activities and they are able to criticize government policies. As required by the rule of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, the people in the Islamic society abide by government orders but at the same time monitor government policies and even criticize them whenever necessary. They are religiously obligated to keep their criticism constructive and relay their views to officials and leaders of the Islamic society even up to the highest echelon. On the other hand, the Islamic state is obliged to encourage the participation and supervision of the people. In other words, it must strive to promote the people's political liberties.

Meanwhile, it must be noted with emphasis that the Islamic approach to freedom is much different from that of the atheistic and secular schools of thought. From the Islamic perspective, freedom does not signify empowerment of the people to commit sins and promiscuities—this is unacceptable. Any promotion of 'freedom' which carries the people away from divine sovereignty is unethical and unprincipled and in conflict with virtue.

7. In the Islamic system, many *mujtahidīn* have been recognized by the people as sources of emulation [*marāji' at-taqlīd*]. Meanwhile, the *walī al-faqīh* is also a *mujtahid* who has a particular understanding of

Islamic laws and this understanding may be different from that of other *mujtahidīn* at a particular time. In such a situation, this question is raised: Which view should the people follow in discharging their religious duties? This conundrum has also been expressed in a different way: In a religious government, on the one hand, the door of *ijtihād* is open and different interpretations are advanced by *marāji' at-taqlīd* and *mujtahidīn* through the institution of *ijtihād*. On the other hand, all the many views cannot practically be converted into administrative decrees. In such a situation, how can administrative decisions be based upon religious views? What is the duty of those people who follow *marāji' at-taqlīd* whose views are not reflected in the administrative decrees and laws?

In reply to these questions, it must be said that obviously, no law can accommodate and reflect all views. It must be borne in mind that once a requirement of the law and government is approved, only one *ijtihād* can be the basis of a law or administrative decision. Similarly, we have implicitly accepted that in any realm where the government has to make decisions, naturally the organs constituting the government must act based on those decisions. In such a situation, in cases where acting upon the law is not considered against the verdicts of a *marja' at-taqlīd*, practically no problem will arise. However, in cases where a conflict exists, assuming that the issue in question is within the jurisdiction of the religious government, the government's decree or decision shall prevail.

Therefore, by delineating the jurisdiction of government decisions and those of personal affairs which are beyond the jurisdiction of the government, the faithful citizen can abide by government policies and at the same time follow his *marja' at-taqlīd*. This is also applicable to the *marāji' at-taqlīd* in the sense that, although they have their own particular juristic views, they must also abide by government policies. In the same vein, experts in fields other than religion must abide by administrative decrees and government decisions even where their expert opinions are inconsistent with those decrees and decisions.

8. The theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh* is the understanding of the Shī'ah *'ulamā'* and *mujtahidūn* from the religious sources. Among the *mujtahidīn*, there may possibly be different views on the Islamic political system during the period of occultation which are distinct from the theory of *wilāyah al-faqīh*. In such a situation, there is no

doubt that only one view must be considered official on which the religious government should be based.

Formalization of a political system has its own process. One conventional method is to transform a theory on the Islamic system into a public covenant. When based on public consensus, a theory acquires a legal status, and it is natural that others who possess a different view must accept the theory as the foundation of the government. It is true that the door for discussion and exchange of opinions regarding the theoretical foundation of the government is always open and the right of concerned experts and scholars to express views is reserved. However, the subject must not be discussed in such way that it would lead to public distrust in the foundation of government and indifference to the legal body, especially the constitution. Obviously, even those who believe that the law must be changed acknowledge a specified way or mechanism of legal amendment.

9. Every political system is explainable within the framework of a particular worldview. When accepting a particular worldview, not every political system can then be accepted. Naturally, depending on a person's perspective on the world and humanity, there are certain limitations in his choice of the type of political system.

Given this explanation, it must be noted that the religious government must not necessarily be consistent with other prevailing political systems. It should not be expected that every political system could be reconciled with the Islamic worldview in every aspect. As such, in dealing with political systems which have been formed on the basis of non-Islamic viewpoints, one must be very careful and meticulous and reserve the right to criticize and deliberate. If there are positive or acceptable points in these systems, these points must be taken and used while observing the limits set by the Islamic worldview or ideology.

This point is applicable with respect to all political concepts. For this reason, in dealing with such concepts, first of all their association with religious views must be examined. Of course, without sufficient knowledge of both the concepts and religious ideology, this examination will be defective. It is possible that in certain political systems, there are certain elements that can be accepted as positive points.

On this basis, it cannot be asserted that democracy, as it is implemented in the West, is totally compatible with the Islamic system. Nevertheless, some of its features as a positive product of human experience can be considered compatible with religious concepts. In other words, a democratic model can be accommodated within the framework of an Islamic system. That is, while the legitimacy of the Islamic system is anchored in religious views, the substance of democratic decisions is also compatible with Islamic law. So long as it does not contradict Islamic rules, democracy as a method or means can be taken.

Public participation in different levels of decision-making, implementation of a parliamentary system, devising systems to monitor the performance of executive organs, selection of officeholders through general suffrage, and similar elements can also be adopted in an Islamic system.

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